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T R E A T I S E
ON THE
P L E N A R Y I N S P I R A T I O N
OF THE
N E W T E S T A M E N T.

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A**T R E A T I S E, &c.**

THE pleasure of study, and the pursuit of truth, have hitherto repaid my labours in investigating the external evidence of the Christian Religion, the plenary Inspiration of whose sacred scriptures demands my future attention. Truth satisfies the mind of a rational being, and God forbid that I should deviate from it in this most important investigation,

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or that I should mistake the giddiness of the head for the illumination of the spirit. Divine Inspiration is of such consequence, that it would conduce very far towards superseding many other marks of veracity, which yet will convey much usefulness as long as men start objections to that plenary Inspiration, under which Christians in general have supposed the sacred historians to have written. I am, indeed, well aware of the many difficulties that occur, in properly ascertaining and proving the plenary Inspiration of the holy scriptures, difficulties that have more than once discouraged me from proceeding when I considered my slender abilities, yet, as studious of truth, I am desirous of embarking,

in order to contribute my endeavours towards establishing this important and almost decisive argument, for the divinity of the Christian religion.

Inspiration means the infusion of ideas into the mind by a superior power, or it is that impression of the Divine Being upon the soul of man, instilling endowments of understanding and expression, more excellent than are attainable in the present state of human nature. In this manner divine Inspiration instilled the predictions of old; in this manner the holy spirit directed and guided the prophets, when they delivered the commands or denunciations of the Almighty. As the holy spirit inspired the prophets, so it never permitted the sacred writers

of the gospel to be mistaken in anything that immediately related, or was essential to the Christian doctrine. This superintendent Inspiration ever accompanied the apostles and evangelists, influenced and directed their minds so as to keep them free from error; it fully and clearly instructed them in all divine truth; it communicated to them the best method of expounding the scriptures and prophecies; it brought to their recollection all that Christ had said to them, and thereby enabled them to teach others without any shadow of mistake or uncertainty. These gifts were bestowed on them by that Holy Spirit, who was "to guide them "into all truth"; by that Holy Ghost, "who should bring all those "things he had taught them to their remem-

"remembrance." Accordingly these miraculous gifts and graces were conferred upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost. In conformity to this, the apostle Paul disclaims all merit to himself of preaching, and other parts of his office, and modestly attributes it to Christ and the divine spirit.

That this superintendent Inspiration ever accompanied the sacred writers in this plenary sense, is next to be deduced from the following arguments:

First. If this had not been the case, the evangelists and apostles could not have faithfully handed down to us the doctrines and discourses of Jesus Christ. Prior to this there appears in the apostles a

great want of proper requisites for recording the gospel ; such as, learning, resolution, and courage, a contempt of this world and its grandeur, memory of the several works of our Lord, and a superiority to national prejudices. Their education was, indeed, suitable to their humble fortune in life ; very few had laid an extensive foundation of human learning, and none had made very quick and large improvements during our Saviour's continuance with them, in consequence of which the gift of tongues was bestowed on them, which amply compensated for this deficiency in knowledge ; enabled them to deliver the fundamentals of christianity to all the various speaking nations of the world, and to digest

digest with clearness and perspicuity the history of our Lord's life and doctrines; their resolution and courage as often as summoned to the trial, so often deserted them. This was remarkably exemplified in St. Peter's denial, and in that solemn scene of Christ's apprehension, when all the disciples forsook him, and fled; him, who had so often ministered to their necessities, and had shewn his divine power by so many miracles, and whom they had confessed to be the Son and Christ of God. Men with such weakness would have shrunk back at the task, and ignobly declined the cause they had espoused; the utmost that could have been expected from them, would have been to have stemmed

the tide of iniquity themselves, but the zeal and courage of reformers would have presented to them insuperable difficulties. The reigning powers would have stifled their religion in its infancy by overawing the first disciples, forbidding their assembling together, or else by having recourse to more violent means; they would have been either terrified at the threats of the Roman magistrate, or else the Jewish high-priest would have purchased their destruction with the treasures of the temple. But aided by the Divine Spirit, they disregarded the menaces of those who bade them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, and openly professed that they would obey God rather than man. One reafoned

reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment before a Roman governor, that had been notoriously guilty of violating each of those virtues; and another, full of the Holy Ghost, prayed to Jesus, in the agonies of death, to forgive his murderers. The same courage supported them in recording the precepts, promises, discourses, miracles, and prophecies of Christ; and this was undertaken when the princes of the world were the greatest enemies to christianity, and were all disposed, if they had been able, to extinguish the light of truth.

Though Christ ratified the early edict, that his kingdom was not of this world, his disciples continued fond of worldly splendor and earthly promotion,

promotion, till the Holy Ghost had inspired them with better ideas. The spirituality of Christ's kingdom was either overlooked by them, or not understood ; they were strongly prepossessed in his being a temporal deliverer and conqueror. Instead of a suffering, they expected a triumphant Messiah ; and supposing that he should quickly enter upon his kingdom glorious in the eyes of men, they disputed amongst themselves for the chief rank, honours and authority therein. But they soon heard from him how ill adapted their present disposition was towards discharging the important office they had been called to. The condition of Christ's kingdom was such, that they who would undertake the greatest.

lest commissions were to receive not the greater emoluments, but endure the more for the good of others. Ambition was a very prevalent vice among the apostles, as appears from the two sons of Zebedee asking the highest degree of honour in the kingdom of Christ; and no less in the other disciples, whose indignation was roused at their requesting a preference to be shewn them. This fondness for earthly superiority, and its consequent indulgencies and luxuries, appears to have struck a deep root in their hearts; for it broke out afresh, so late as after the resurrection of our Saviour, when at his appearance to them they asked him, "Wilt thou at this time restore "again the kingdom to Israel?"

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In this state of their minds their fidelity was in great danger of being corrupted, and their fortitude enervated. And as the fascinating charms of earthly grandeur had such mighty influence over the first disciples, so their ambitious views contributed in a great measure to erase from their minds the memory of our Lord's miraculous works and doctrine. Whilst this cloud of error darkened their understandings, a want of faith was very predominant amongst them; as appears from this observation made to Jesus by the two disciples on their journey to Emmaus; “ We trusted
“ that it had been he which should
“ have redeemed Israel:” For what reason was there why they should not still trust, unless the power of
God.

God was not sufficiently present to their minds? that power which had so often been exerted in miracles to their conviction. And we find in the sequel, they take shame to themselves for not recollecting their Lord and Master; that if their minds had not been infatuated, they might have known him from his manner of instructing, and arguments he had often before advanced, to prove the necessity of his passion and his resurrection from the dead.

A superiority to national prejudices seems to be another very desirable qualification in the apostles and evangelists. Many of the partial notions that infected the whole body of the Jewish people, spread also amongst the first disciples. Thus
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that deep-rooted persuasion mentioned by Josephus, "The Jews rebelled against the Romans, being encouraged thereto by a celebrated prophecy in their scriptures, that about that time a famous prince should be born among them that should rule the world," met with a reception amongst them also. This they had imbibed in their earliest infancy, their education being such as readily prepared their minds for the influence of such prejudices; for it is notorious that they entertained notions of Christ's delivering the Jewish nation from the Roman yoke. And particularly they were prejudiced against our Saviour's resurrection so much, that one of them, though the rest of the a-

postles assured him they had really seen their Master alive again, yet professed, except he should see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, he would not believe. Unaccountable prejudice! after he had been an eyewitness of our Saviour's miracles, and heard him mention and assert the certainty of his rising again the third day. Against the Gentiles there had also been encouraged by the Jews violent prejudices, which also crept into the minds of the apostles, and maintained their ground, till St. Peter had been instructed by a heavenly vision not to call any man common or unclean; that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh

worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. These impediments rendered them incompetent for the apostleship, and to record the doctrine and precepts of Christ, till the Divine Spirit had illuminated their minds, had brought to their remembrance all that Christ at various times had said unto them, and added more things equally necessary which they were not capable of receiving before. It supplied their defect of understanding by the miraculous gift of tongues, whereby they were able to plant the gospel in various nations of the world, and not only to preach, but leave for their perusal and confirmation the principles of christianity. It endued them with a courage as well

as wisdom, which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist. This was remarkably fulfilled in St. Stephen. And this was principally the cause of the enemies of truth having recourse to the cruelty of punishments, because they could not find arguments in the smallest degree specious to advance against their doctrine. All their desires after sublunary enjoyments, all their secret wishes of worldly grandeur and honour, which often broke forth before Christ, and received their proper correction, vanished at the fulfilling of the divine promise of their Master, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They now reckoned all things but loss for the knowledge of Christ Jesus. The same Spirit

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brought to their remembrance the various transactions of our Saviour's life, that, thro' lapse of memory, would else have been buried in oblivion. As soon as they began to understand the scriptures by this divine inspiration, they remembered his words and the writings of the prophets, observing their infallible veracity, and particularly of Isaiah, who had foretold that the life of the Messiah would be glorious after he had given himself a sacrifice for sin. St. John does not scruple to confess his own and their former ignorance; but after Christ's ascension they appear to have a perfect recollection and comprehension of the prophet. His ascension and the following mission of the Holy Ghost took away from them

them the opinion they had entertained of an earthly kingdom, and taught them that this kingdom, though mean in the eyes of men, was the most exalted of all, was glorious in the sight of God. The divine goodness also vouchsafed to remove those prejudices of their education and circumstances, which the apostles in common with the Jews had entertained against the Gentiles, and convinced them that christianity was adapted to all mankind in general, and its precepts of an universal nature ; that every one who practised the duties of mercy and piety, be he of whatever nation, language or profession, was a proper subject of Christ's kingdom, and entitled to the benefits of the

gospel dispensation. Accompanied therefore by this divine superintendant, Inspiration, by which they were freed from all the passions and weaknesses incident to human nature, that would in any wise have retarded the progress of the gospel, they have faithfully handed down to us the doctrines and discourses of Christ. The proof of facts depends on those witnesses in a more especial manner, in whom it is evident whether they are inclined to speak the truth, and whether they know the truth. They are to be reckoned as well disposed to speak the truth who are of unblameable life, and have no earthly advantage to expect from their testimony. Such were the foreordained witnesses of the resurrection and works

works of Christ; men of the most holy life, and who were so far from any expectation of temporal emolument or gain, that they endured every kind of distress and inconvenience on account of that testimony. They were made well acquainted with the truth of the gospel by the extraordinary powers conferred on them by means of the holy Ghost, which not only recovered the doctrines which time had erased from their memories, but suggested every thing that was necessary for an apostle and evangelist. By the same divine inspiration they imbibed the best method of teaching mankind whatever is necessary for them to know and believe, whatever becomes them to hope for and prac-

tise in order to salvation. These important considerations were recorded with the utmost fidelity as well as plainness and clearness, so that they who make a right use of their reason, cannot misunderstand them.

Secondly, If this superintendent, Inspiration, had not accompanied the apostles and evangelists, they could not have taken upon them to have exercised the authority of Christ in publishing his doctrine with effect, and have given proof of being invested with that authority by their power of working miracles.

The importance of their doctrine and the authority by which they spake, sufficiently arrested the attention of mankind to the apostles ser-

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mons and the writings of the evangelists. The confirmation of this power established and supported their teaching and precepts with the highest advantage over natural religion. The Gentiles, or heathen nations, which were guided in their actions by the law of nature, must have been conscious of its being loose and unsettled in numerous instances of duty, since it authorises every one to decide on the propriety or impropriety of its rules, in which case the consciences of men either accuse or else excuse them, according to their habits and affections. It is so far from having authority to enforce or inducements to persuade, that it gives no certain information with regard to duty.

On the contrary, the christian law was made known in absolute and plain language. Its obligations cannot be shifted off by the artifices of a bad mind. Nothing short of obedience is allowed, for they are urged by a power that will not bear contempt or neglect without exemplary punishment. This authority was conveyed to the first disciples by Christ himself, and afterwards it received an additional sanction by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; in consequence of which the apostles delivered the christian law with a power superior to that of other religious systems. They taught a doctrine giving a clear and exact description of moral and religious duty. They consulted the dearest interests

of mankind by publishing a revelation of the divine will, and pointed out to every one a line of duty, whereby all that have lived within the reach of its benign influence may know it to be their highest advantage so to conduct themselves that they may escape the fatal effects of infringing it. They have handed down to us a just account of our Saviour's discourses and of the substance of the christian doctrine, testifying only what they oftentimes heard from their divine Master; among which we must rank the important doctrines of life and immortality which were brought to light by the gospel, and which no teacher of morality, nor institutor of religion, nor founder of government, had before

fore established. The Christian revelation informs us likewise of many circumstances, which we should have in vain sought for in other systems; such as, the terms and conditions of our acceptance with God, the great Redeemer of the world, who is likewise to be the judge of all mankind; whether they discoursed at one time of Christ, who he was, or of his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; or whether at another time they instructed the people in the nature of prayer and moral duties; we find these several important truths recorded in the very words of their divine Author. Thus were they miraculously assisted in recollecting the discourses and parables of Christ, in order that they might give a perfect

fect representation of his religion, and teach and publish the same doctrine after his departure. And it cannot be supposed, that the perfectly wise and righteous Governor of the world, would permit an impostor to give such a convincing testimonial of divine inspiration, a testimonial of sufficient knowledge and authority, to deliver a plan of religion every way properly adapted to reform the world. But the apostles' claim to credit was most ample and satisfactory, in that they were men of known probity and unimpeached integrity, and that their prudence and understanding were in all circumstances fit for the peculiar office to which they were chosen. The second branch of this argument relates

relates to their demonstrating their possession of this authority by working miracles. A miracle being an action visibly performed on some extraordinary occasion, though at the same time above the power of man to do of himself; and without the assistance of a superior agent, they who exerted this power, in order to prove themselves to be sent of God, and in confirmation of a doctrine worthy of the Divine Being, suitable to his glorious attributes, and perfective of the true happiness of man, fully ascertained their title to their apostolic commission. And these divine works were accompanied with such remarkable openness and honesty, as we naturally expect in those who perform miracles under divine

divine Inspiration, whereas imposition is ever attended with privacy, reserve, suspicion, and distance. The power of restoring the lame was exerted by the apostles Peter and John, very soon after the gift of tongues and effusion of the Holy Ghost: in like manner whether the apostles healed the sick, raised the dead, or cured the cripple, their supplications were always heard, to effect these beneficent deeds. Whoever impartially considers the circumstances of these miracles, as well as the ends for which they were wrought, must confess them to be real, and to be intended to bring men to the knowledge of God and goodness, and guide them to happiness. Thus did the first disciples
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"with all boldness speak the word," stretch forth their hands to heal, perform signs and wonders by the name of Jesus, and prove their doctrine to be the word of God.

Another argument, in confirmation of a superintendent Inspiration residing with the first disciples, is the intrinsic evidence of the divine origin of scripture, exemplified in the perfect holiness of its precepts; these enforce the worship of the Divine Being, as well as the principal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, as all the other concomitant virtues, such as charity, faith, mercy, contentment, truth, humility, and patience; to these must be added, the doctrine of a future life and immortality, a doctrine

doctrine peculiar to the gospel, established by it on the surest grounds, and conveying the most solid satisfaction to every believer. The near affinity these doctrines, as taught in the gospel, bear to the divine spirit of promise, inspiring the apostles and evangelists, will be best seen by considering their nature and superior influence.

God is a spirit of perfect purity and truth. All adoration of the Divine Being ought to be agreeable to his nature. As the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, but the whole universe is continually full of his spirit, so there is no distinction of places, nor one region more adapted than another to the worship of the Almighty. Whole nations

nations have too long vied with each other in the grandeur of edifices for the worship of the Supreme Being, hereby indulging a false pride, and opposing several precepts of the sacred writings. It was so in all antiquity, not to mention one particular nation ; it has been, and is still so in Roman Catholic countries, and it is so even among Protestants : so that if we were to compare the worship of the Divine Being, either as it is implanted in us by nature, or recommended to us by the precepts of holy writ, with the modes of worshipping him that have hitherto obtained, we should be so far from tracing any just similiarity in its most essential points, that we should be at a loss to account for their

their departure from so plain a rule. But the error is not to be imputed to the instincts of nature, human reason, or the sacred writings; the fountain is clear, and the streams that have issued from it have been polluted by the wrong conceptions and misguided zeal of mankind. The worship of God is described in the holy scriptures so plain that he that runs may read it; so conformable to the most perfect natural determinations, that the most innocent and best disposed mortal, unassisted by revelation; must have adopted it; and so pure and excellent as to claim a divine original. It teaches us the proper nature of divine adoration, that the true worshippers must worship God in spirit

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and in truth, not with incense, or the hypocritical observation of rites and ceremonies, but with pure hearts and integrity of life. Such is the worship of the Divine Being, as recommended in the divinely inspired gospel, and they who thus worship God will find their sacrifice accepted. How much more excellent is this rational doctrine than the sacred rites of the Pagans, which every where abounded in cruelty ! How much superior is this liberal institution to the jewish religion, which was loaded with numerous ceremonies and precepts, so indifferent as to have no other cause for their appointment than to amuse the Jews, lest they should revolt to idolatry. Such being the nature of the Christian

worship, as delivered in the gospel, a question arises, On what foundation is public or social worship supported? In order to account for the silence of Christ, particularly on this head, the following reasons are with great humility submitted: He declined leaving any peculiar injunctions for the practice of public worship, that men might not neglect, or give it the preference to private prayer, which, in some respects, is more adapted to our infirmities. He therefore contented himself with only enjoining prayer in general, leaving it to men's inclinations which to adopt. Another reason for Christ's giving no example of ordaining public worship was, to avoid an inconsistency of conduct; for the people

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would have said to him, Hast thou not been declared publicly to be the Son of God? Have not thy disciples asserted it also? Hast thou not thyself claimed to be the Son of God? Do not thy numerous miracles demonstrate a divine power? And dost thou pray like a weak, indigent creature? Thou, who hast the power of multiplying a few loaves to a sufficiency for thousands?

A third reason for Christ's omitting to lead the multitudes, and various other companies, immediately by his example, to the practice of public or social worship, was, lest the people, fresh from the reception of Christ's bounty, either of food or other miraculous works, should transfer their adoration from the

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Creator and Father of the Universe, to their present benefactor ; for so the worship of the one only God would have been divided, and its unity destroyed. But the example of the apostles and first disciples, is handed down to us in the following passages, as performing this holy duty to the full extent the infancy of the church would permit them. St. Luke closes his history with informing us, that after Christ's ascension, the apostles returned to Jerusalem, and were continually in the temple at the stated hours of prayer. In Acts, second chapter, and 46th verse, is an instance of three thousand souls, continuing daily, with one accord, in the temple, which they never would have done without the apostles

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particular injunctions; and the next chapter begins, describing the apostles Peter and John, going up together into the temple at the hour of prayer; and in the 12th, 13th, 20th, and 21st chapters of the Acts, the example of the apostles and first disciples is equally conspicuous in social worship. In addition to these examples of the apostles and first disciples, the argument receives very considerable support from the expediency and utility of public worship. Places of public worship are expedient to maintain and spread abroad a spirit of religion. The regularity and order with which every thing is conducted in them, the solemnity of the several offices of devotion, and the service performed with

with the utmost decency and decorum, inspire the attentive hearer with veneration and awe. The subjects treated are, the principles and duties of religion and morality, in order that every one may comprehend and practise them, as the surest means of promoting and preserving universal happiness. Great are the benefits of a proper application of the Scriptures, and confessedly great the efficacy of the word, duly dispensed. Let ministers exert themselves with a spirit becoming the importance of their subject and the dignity of their calling, and then very advantageous must be the influence of the sacerdotal situation; the hearts of the obdurate will be softened; the hardened will feel com-

punction and remorse, and the vicious be reclaimed from the error of his way. They who advance uniformly and evenly in the christian course, will be encouraged to go on unto perfection, till they experience such delight in the house of prayer as is congenial to the soul of man, and suited to its large capacities and desires. A person who frequents public worship as he ought, shews not in the least a confident aspect, but approaches the throne of grace with the most graceful modesty. He composes himself with so much goodnes, that the confession which he utters appears an act of humiliation becoming a dependent creature. Gratitude and joy at thanksgiving,
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lowliness and sorrow at the prayers for the sick and distressed, a holy exultation of the passages which give instances of the Divine mercy, appear respectively in his aspect: they who approve what is excellent, must not only admire such an example of devotion, but also that mode which is capable of setting a person loose of all worldly regards, and intent upon futurity. The fitness of public worship therefore, appears from its being sincerely designed, to discountenance vice and ignorance, and from its immediate tendency to the advancement of religion and morality.

The propriety of public worship is further evident, from its aim and direction, to quicken piety towards the Divine Being, and encourage the

the progress of morality by rousing the memory to a solemn consideration of God's moral administration of the world. In this respect it has by far the advantage of private prayer. To see a multitude of fellow-creatures assembled together in divine adoration, calling with one voice on their Creator and Judge for pardon and forgiveness, uniting in supplications to the throne of heaven for grace and spiritual aid, or emulous in praise and thanksgiving, must impress the thoughtful mind with a serious representation of God's abhorrence of vice and regard for virtue. To see both rich and poor, the beggar and the prince, equally accepted in the presence of the Almighty, must inspire

inspire the most exalted notion of the impartial government of the Divine Being. To worship God in society must remind us of our common relationship to the Divine Being, as the parent of the human race, from whom we are all equally descended, with the same claims to his fatherly protection, with the same natural endowments to glorify his righteous name, and with the same qualifications to contemplate the wonderful works of creation. Hence arises the best opportunity to know and feel our obligations to brotherly love and mutual charity, forasmuch as we meet in public prayer to our common father, in social worship to celebrate unitedly his excellencies and attributes, and as one fold under
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one shepherd, Jesus Christ. From hence mankind are taught to reverence the Almighty as a rewarder of the righteous and punisher of the wicked, in recompensing men according to their actions in this life, considered as good and evil: for herein the perfection of moral government consists. And that the world may have no excuse, but feel this important truth brought home to their own bosoms, God has endowed all men with a moral nature, capable of distinguishing between good and evil, and discerning the happiness of virtue, and misery of vice; and at the same time able to reason from these premisses, that He will finally protect and reward virtue in the most effectual manner. Any method

method productive of mental consolation to the humble and contrite, appears to me so praise-worthy and deserving encouragement, that there is evidently a great utility in stated times for public worship. For it is observable in common life, that, that which is left to be done at random, and as the memory shall dictate, is either totally neglected, or very imperfectly attempted. But when there are stated seasons, known to all men, for the celebration of divine worship, we run none of those risques, unless from wilful negligence. The child may be trained up in the way he should go, and comfort the anxious parent with the happy prospect, that when he is old, he will not depart from it. The disso-

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lute may be drawn by example to the service of God, and reclaimed from his vicious ways; and the sabbath-breaker, induced to reverence the sanctuary and house of prayer, confused and ashamed at seeing himself marked and disgraced in the eyes of sober christians. The unlearned and common people, that cannot read, on these solemn occasions meet with the fittest opportunities to improve their minds in the truths of eternal life, and hear the knowledge of the Most High. To you, therefore, who admit the peculiar excellence of the christian religion, and profess a regard for it, and yet seldom honour the public institutions of it by an attendance on them, let me address a few words.

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Are they not calculated to make you truly devout? May not your understanding be informed, your imagination entertained, your heart engaged, and your passions interested in them? If you would but resist your aversion to devotion, and instead thereof encourage a habit of serious attention, and restrain your appetites and passions by the rules of religion, and you will find the greatest pleasure in attending on its offices. Break from your dissipated courses of life, and accustom yourselves to sober thoughts, recreations, and amusements, and you will admire and be delighted with the exercises of devotion. To christians in general, let me also give this brief advice: Watch your foot-

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steps when you go to the house of prayer, that you decline not to the paths of wickedness; and notwithstanding it is not the fashion of the age, frequent the service of God, that your faith in Christ may be confirmed, your hope realized, your devotion fervent, yet composed; you will find your Lord powerful and mighty to save, the holy scriptures to be the word of God, and your public profession of religion a sincere comfort to you both in prosperity and adversity. With how much greater dignity and benefit to the world has religion thus been conceived and expressed than by the deist? For revelation confirms the foundation of all religion, the being of a God; and also instructs us in

the best manner how to perform the service he requires at the hands of his creatures. It establishes every point that natural light discovers, a providence, a future state, with rewards and punishments for the good and bad, and also points out to us the fittest way to honour God and perform his will, as well as supplies us with a rule of duty immediately to God himself. Where natural religion fails us, we arrive at the knowledge of this service by divine revelation. How groundless, how tottering is the fabrick of natural religion, when deprived of those powerful supports it borrows from revelation ! Can we derive from any other authority the notion of the goodness of God ? The only assur-

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ance of this doctrine is to be deduced from the word which cannot lie, that "God is good, and his tender mercies are over all his works." The Deist is not honest enough to declare he draws his notion of the goodness of God from revelation, though he be sensible of the difficulty of deducing it from a natural source. And yet it is incontrovertible that the sacred writings have furnished unbelievers with the moral attributes of the Deity, and particularly that of benevolence. And whence do they derive the apprehension of the evils and punishments of another life but from scripture? But the same scripture assures us that God is perfect goodness, and therefore he designs the happiness
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of all his creatures at last, happiness equal to the inclinations, the desires, the wishes of mankind. From the mere dictates of natural reason we advance a step further, and learn the will and pleasure of the Creator, either by an express declaration of God himself, or by a superintendent inspiration. Reason fails us in several instances : Thus the resurrection of our bodies after death is a truth above the powers of our reason ; its certainty has only been ascertained by divine revelation. This and other certain points of faith and duty, of which natural reason could not inform us, have been discovered to us by the good pleasure of Almighty God, who hath revealed to us the knowledge of his nature, dis-

pensation and providence, and declared to us the duty and service he requires at our hands, even to their utmost extent. The gospel, in which these truths are revealed, is built on that part of the Jewish revelation which prophesied of the Meffiah being born among them, who accordingly was a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel, and in whose advent the world in general had the greatest reason to rejoice. In this gospel the christian religion is laid down as comprising a system of faith and morals, necessary to promote peace and good-will on earth, and to procure eternal happiness in heaven: for the manifest design of Christ in every transaction of his life appears to be this;

this; to restore the corrupt and sinful race of men to their former uprightness and holiness, to publish the glad tidings of salvation upon their fulfilling certain conditions of obedience, and, after a short period, to submit to the painful death of the cross, in order to purchase everlasting life for all sincere believers in the gospel. To further this design, the several virtues that can adorn the human character, and approximate it to the Deity, make a principal part of the christian doctrines. The prudence recommended in the gospel is separate from all fraud or deceit, and accompanied with innocence and simplicity of manners. It is no impeachment of this virtue, that it is so little cultivated by man-

kind. These are days of suspicion and deception, and they are reckoned the most prudent, who carry the mask of hypocrisy most adroitly. But still the virtue of prudence contains within it the spirit of wisdom applicable to practice, unextinguished by the corruption of the times, and is capable of instructing any man, who would live virtuously and honestly, in what is fit to be done. As prudence will direct the judgment for the best, so temperance renders the will constant and firm to execute. The christian religion requires this virtue in a very ample degree, without which man falls very short of perfection, not being able to restrain too violent passions and affections, such as ambition, envy, fear,

fear, and the like. It demands that our moderation be known unto all men, our modesty, lenity and candour be conspicuous to the whole world: That we be calm under afflictions, and put up with small affronts and trifling injuries for the sake of peace, and rather than we should violate public harmony and charity: That we try all the means we can, every possible expedient, in order to live peaceably with all men, before we shew a disposition to resent an insult and punish an injury by the civil arm of society. Thus may the profession and practice of christianity be reconciled in all instances with the common duties of life, and general dispensations of providence.

Because men are apt to be too slow and languid in the performance of christian duties, the virtue of fortitude is inculcated in order to spur and urge them on. But because the most excellent qualities may and actually do degenerate by reason of the corrupt customs of the world, this, among others, has been grossly abused. But the fortitude recommended in the gospel is of the most perfect kind. In the honourable cause of truth the greatest intrepidity is enjoined. True magnanimity is an essential requisite in defence of the christian religion. I could appeal to a multitude of examples who thus vindicated the cause of truth, virtue and liberty; who never shrank at danger, or feared

feared the menaces of a tyrant's frown.

And that the well-being of society may never be endangered, that the rights of others may be regarded as well as our own, justice is very strongly enforced in the christian law. The nature of justice is a constant desire or inclination to give every one his due. It observes an equality in apportioning rewards and punishments according to each man's condition and merit. It is conversant likewise in matters of commerce, and our dealings one with another, wherein it is guided by this golden rule, "to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us" in like circumstances. In the scripture-delineation of good,

" What,

“ What, O man ! doth the Lord
“ require of thee, in the first place,
“ but to do justly ? ” That in par-
ticular you should so deal with every
man, as in like circumstances you
can reasonably expect he should deal
with you ; and that in general you
endeavour, by an universal benevo-
lence, to promote the welfare and
happiness of all men. That you be
not swayed by any partial motive
when you are called upon to give
evidence, or to pronounce your ver-
dict. The momentous determina-
tion you then make, forbids the
least bias or inclination of the mind.
It excludes all fear, favour and af-
fection, and pays no regard to rich
or poor, high or low. That there
be no mental reservation, nothing
kept

kept back by which the truth may be obscured, or hindered coming forth, to the confusion of the injurious and wicked, as well as the acquittal of the innocent and peaceable citizen. That you be influenced with the utmost veneration and love for justice, then there will be no fear of your determining to the best of your judgment. You will be more diligent in promoting the jurisprudence of your country, which is of the utmost importance, in order to reach delinquencies of every kind, and fairly and clearly demonstrate the guilt or innocence of those subject to its notice. To this may be referred truth as a part or concomitant. The christian religion enjoins that a regard for truth be visible in

our words on so solemn an occasion. Its importance to civil society is very evident from the frequent appeal courts of justice make to an oath, which in its nature is a very awful action, whereby God is called to witness the truth of our affirmation. So that if we hope either for his protection here, or forgiveness hereafter, we must pay a sacred regard to truth in all things, but particularly the more important transactions of society in the execution of justice. That no one should officiously interfere and busily intrude himself into the administration of justice for any other purpose than that of causing the law to be observed, and its judgments executed. It is constituted for the good of human society and.

and happiness of every individual, and when properly administered, has an undoubted claim to our reverence and veneration. Long may it flourish to these valuable purposes in these kingdoms, nor ever suffer any defeat! To perfect the execution of justice all private animosities and interests should disappear. "It must needs be that offences will come." The constitution of the world is such that passions hurry men away, that anger and wrath, malice and envy have too great a sway in our breasts; but it is our duty to divest ourselves of these, that the course of justice be not obstructed, which our reason points out to us as very necessary, and our holy religion peculiarly enjoins. By these methods the ends

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of justice may be answered ; and the man that is thus just will always shew that tranquil firmness, which disappoints the factious, and contribute to the maintenance of public order, peace and tranquillity.

All the other virtues are parts of, or connected with the foregoing ; and are enforced in the sacred writings from their innate excellence, proving that the design of scripture is to raise human nature to its original rank in the scale of beings. Charity in the gospel is the virtue of universal love, as universal as the christian law, and as general as the revelation of the gospel. The word (*αγάπη*, charity) must be explained to signify love, a charitable, a christian and a godlike temper, supplying

ing us with a most striking representation of the real intention and drift of the christian religion. The Founder of our faith enjoins every person to love his enemies, to do good to them that hate him, in hopes that that law, which when practised by few seems most unlikely to succeed, may, by the future approbation of the bulk of mankind, draw all men into such unanimity and fellowship as to render the precept of no further use. To instruct men in their duty of regarding each other as brethren under the defence of one universal parent, and thereby to join them in the reciprocal employment of general love and charity, were subjects principally enforced by Christ and his apostles on

every

every opportunity, and should, on that account, be reckoned the most essential obligations of religious practice. In the parable of the good Samaritan Christ explained the nature and extent of christian charity quite different from the practice of all former ages, and more excellent in its kind. In that fine allegory we meet with this plain instruction, that we are to practise the same active compassion and benevolence which our Lord himself always manifested and encouraged by his own example, not only on some peculiar occasions, but in the grand design and plan which he invariably prosecuted, both during his residence on earth and in his sufferings on the cross. All professors of christianity are thereby informed,

formed, that notwithstanding they are divided into so many sects of opposite persuasions concerning tenets frequently unimportant, they are not to consider themselves as the only true disciples of Christ, and on that account confine to their own body in particular the engaging exercise of love and charity, the use and performance of which should spread abroad to every necessitous fellow-creature. If men, however inclined to unbelief, did but set a true value on, or with deference consider the sufferings of Christ, they must confess their superior efficacy in raising and improving morality in the point before us, above all other schemes of religion: for no argument would influence us to shew

a tenderness, affection, and regard, even for the most dejected and despised object sooner than the consideration, that he is equally with us a partaker of the benefits of Christ's death.

And lest the amiable quality of Justice should degenerate into cruelty or excessive severity, the Almighty has implanted in our breasts the seeds of mercy, and the christian religion rectifies and directs it to its proper objects. As no human character is perfect, we sometimes see private enmities confounded with public justice, so Mercy is too often explained by that ill-placed lenity that is frequently shewn to the outcasts of society, by that false compassion that is often lavished by juries

juries on the miscreants that are brought to trial, and by that mistaken clemency which extends mercy to an undeserving citizen. But the virtue lies betwixt these two extremes, and equally remote from either. As the true definition of Justice is a constant and habitual disposition to give to all their due, so mercy consists in a tenderness for the good of others ; a willingness to save where there are favourable circumstances in the case, and an unwillingness to punish, unless it be absolutely necessary for the reformation of the offender, or the welfare of the society to which he belongs. What, O man ! doth the Lord require of thee more earnestly in the sacred scriptures than to love mercy ?

That in the general course of your lives you are ever ready to relieve the distressed of whatever name, nation and religion, and in the particular office you are called upon for the good of your country at solemn seasons of administering justice, whether as an evidence, accuser, or as a person sworn to deliver truth on such evidence as shall be given, to mingle justice with mercy. For this purpose you will suffer no prejudice against any one to prepossess your hearts, or harden your feelings against a distressed object sufficiently miserable already by sin and vice. If misfortune alone hath been the cause of bringing a fellow-creature to the bar of an earthly tribunal, humanity strongly impels us to shew him

him the deeds of mercy. Mercy is so woven into the very frame of our natures as not to need either force or compulsion in the author or receiver, both of whom are amply gratified in its effects. It is the brightest gem of a Monarch's crown; it is the perfection which God himself most delights in exercising. Surely then, if we would imitate the Divine Being, let mercy season justice.

Humility is peculiarly a christian virtue, and frequently recommended in the gospel, and enforced by the example of the founder of our religion: its nature is to bring down the mind to its proper standard. The reasonableness of our practising this salutary duty will

appear as often as we turn our eyes upon ourselves, and reflect on our being, our infirmities, necessities, and the dependence we owe to, and are sometimes willing and ready enough to claim from God, our Creator, Preserver and Redeemer. What, O man ! doth the Lord more affectionately demand of thee, than to walk humbly in the ordinances of God ? To obey his precepts and walk in his commandments with humility of heart, is, in his estimation, better than offering the most costly sacrifice.

The christian religion is the only system that could ever efficaciously generate in the human mind the virtue of contentment. That we may be easy and satisfied with our present

present state and circumstances, some who pretended to the name of Philosophers, have tried to convince us that discontent brings its own punishment with it, and will never change our condition for the better; others have said, that a fatal necessity is the cause of all the evils that befall us, and therefore it is in vain to resist and murmur; and others have endeavoured to console the unhappy and wretched, by arguing for the necessity of their suffering in order to support the harmony of the universe, and that the plans of Providence may be carried on without confusion and a change for the worse: but such doctrines only appease the murmurs of men for awhile, and can never give contentment.

tentment. As far as they evince the unreasonableness of discontent, they are praise-worthy, but they are not in the least calculated to ease the pain of the mind. The disappointment of the end would terminate in despair, man being denied thereby an alleviation of misery. But see the reverse in the christian religion, a system expressive throughout of the kindest attention and anxiety for the good of mankind : it teaches a man in whatever state he is therewith to be content ; if misery be his lot, it points out a method of improving his circumstances, assuring him that a becoming patience under pressures and calamities will of itself disperse them. It gives contentment to him here from

from the certainty of rendering him happy through the ages of eternity; it is no inconsiderable encouragement to him, that its blessed Founder has left so conspicuous example of patience and contentment beyond all the sages of antiquity. How must his devout wonder increase when he surveys the severe trials of Christ's patience, when he repressed the ardour and forwardness of the disciple who would have had recourse to force, at the time his enemies were about to apprehend him, with this gentle rebuke, "The cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" The sufferings which it seems fit to Almighty Wisdom I should undergo, I am ready to bear.

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The last moral duty of christianity I shall enumerate, is Faith. The scripture definition of Faith is, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." There are some things belonging to God, his nature, attributes, and other revealed truths, which we are obliged to give our assent to, without having recourse to the common foundation of reason, which in these instances could not enable us to see and understand fully their evidence. The promises and declarations of God, are the objects of the gospel faith, and a firm trust and reliance on him, for the performance of its very life, and soul. The mysteries of christianity must be acknowledged to be superior to the human understanding;

ing ; all other objects of the christian faith are attainable by human reason, enlightened by divine grace. If there be any doubt of a proposition coming from God, our reason may be the proper guide to found our faith accordingly ; but when we are fully convinced, we have the strongest reason to rest our faith upon it. As in this, that God will certainly raise mankind to another life, and judge them according to their behaviour in this world, by Christ Jesus, whom he hath appointed to that purpose ; for of this, " he hath given us an assurance by raising him from the dead." The christian doctrine of eternal life is with the utmost propriety adapted to further every momentous intention of a divine revelation,

lation, and it excels all the efforts of philosophy in animating mankind to firm and steady virtue, to supply them with efficacious power to resist temptations, to fortify them under the most troublesome pains and vicissitudes of life, and raise them above the fear of death. The stoic philosophers flattered human pride with their position that virtue is its own reward ; but few are of that exalted nature to practise virtue for the love of virtue itself, or be eminent for their moral lives from the pleasure they receive in the performance of those offices which reason dictates. Sublime souls are ye ! But the bulk of mankind require a system of greater perfection, a future reward so indisputable as to claim immediate

diate belief. It is the gospel alone that inspires us with just and consistent hopes of an immortal life, our faith in which increases the gratification, and strengthens us in the practice of religion and virtue. And if the reward promised by christianity is so powerful an incentive to virtuous actions, surely, no one can with reason deny it to be the chief motive that will support us under evils. Hence we endure with submission the troubles and afflictions, which, in all likelihood, are frequently unmerited, being convinced that they contribute to perfect the secret designs of Divine Providence, and that they are purposely sent as the test of our virtue and resolution, in order to receive a future eternal recompence.

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The stoic philosopher required as well as boldly assured the highest excellence in this sublunary state; at the same time men must be conscious of their inability to attain it, thereby treating our nature with insolence, and disheartening our endeavours after improvement. On the contrary, our infirmities meet with the utmost tenderness and compassion from christianity, inasmuch as it only enjoins us to be diligent in making additional progress and advancements towards a perfection in goodness; and encourages our labour with the assurance of heavenly assistance adequate to the important undertaking. With such superiority, and much more than I am able to express, do the precepts

precepts and doctrines of the gospel recommend themselves to the notice of mankind.

The next argument for the divine origin of the sacred writings of the New Testament, is the agreement of the various parts of its doctrines.

Four gospels only have been admitted, and are still retained, as of tried and undoubted authority. Of their authors, two, Matthew and John, were disciples and apostles of Christ, who relate what they themselves had heard or seen. The other two, Mark and Luke, were not indeed apostles, but fellow-travellers and constant companions of apostles; Mark, the associate of Peter, under whose eye Mark is related to have written his gospel; Luke, the companion

panion of Paul, by whose assistance he wrote his gospel. There does not appear to have been a necessity to compose the gospel immediately after the death of Christ, whilst all the apostles were as yet living in Judea. But some years after, when the apostles were about to disperse and preach amongst the different nations of the world, the evangelists wrote, though not at the same time but in succession, and in the exact order as they have been placed. Matthew wrote his gospel at Jerusalem, eight years after Christ's ascension. Mark wrote ten years after Christ's being received up into heaven. At what time Luke wrote, is uncertain; but this we may depend on, that he wrote when many were

were endeavouring to compile a history of Christ's life, which certainly was not at the very beginning of the church. John wrote in the thirty-second year after Christ's ascension. And because the rest had begun their histories with the subject of Christ's humanity, he, at the intertreaty of all the bishops of Asia, expressly wrote of his divinity. These subjects make their principal difference, for which a sufficient reason is easily found. In other points of moment there is a wonderful agreement amongst all the evangelists, though they wrote at different places and times. Some inconsiderable difference indeed appears in their writings, which is the greatest demonstration of their truth, and frees

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them from all suspicion of writing in compact and concert; but their disagreement exists only in words and things of an indifferent nature, they wonderfully agree in their meaning and principal doctrines. A supposed difference of sense has sometimes been objected to, in order to invalidate the evangelical writings; but an impartial mind will, on the contrary, allow it to be a proof of their divine authority, that the momentous points of doctrine, as well as the evangelical history, most clearly agree. The same articles of faith are proposed by all the sacred writers, the same precepts are enforced, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are related with the same fidelity, precision, and truth.

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Even circumstances of less importance might be easily reconciled, if we had a certain clue to guide us to the knowledge of the manners and customs of the age. This very disparity in trifling circumstances ought to clear the sacred historians from all suspicion of design or fraud, forasmuch as impostors only are remarkable for their circumspection and caution, in entering into and abiding by agreement so to conform their relations and assertions as to prevent all appearance of inconsistency, and even diversity of opinion. And by the same rule we must give up many valuable histories, if a trifling difference is to destroy their credit. Their credit is not to be destroyed; the present enlightened age will maintain

their well-merited reputation : and if mankind deny not such ample credibility to historians of classical lore, undoubtedly the thinking part of the world will not refuse it to the truths of everlasting salvation, the doctrine of their Saviour, the covenant betwixt God and man. The plain state of the case seems to be this : The evangelists are allowed to have related some facts with manifest difference ; yet this is so far from disparaging their history, that it is the clearest evidence that they did not compose their accounts in concert, or with collusion. By the same argument the single witness of each evangelist is unalterably fixed, not relying on another, and the common history acquires additional claim

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to credit, their agreement being a striking proof of their common veracity. A competent knowledge of the circumstances recorded, and fidelity in relating them, appear to be leading features in the characters of the evangelical writers, in that their narrations and records may be made consistent with each other; and the important doctrines and precepts are so exactly similar, that it stamps upon them an uniformity and excellence, unknown to any other histories. From hence we are led to enquire how men so unacquainted with polite literature, and at such distant periods and countries, should so uniformly coincide in their principal doctrines and precepts as the evangelists, unless we admit that they

were divinely inspired? or how could such illiterate persons as the apostles have enriched their writings with such judicious moral reflections, such a propriety and elevation of thought, if they had not been directed by a superintendent inspiration? If the Jews could express their surprise at the preaching of Christ in these words, " how knoweth this man " letters, having never learned?" we have much more reason to be astonished at the wonderful exertions of the Holy Ghost exemplified in the apostles, the miracles they performed, and their perfect understanding and memory of Christ's doctrines and discourses in so short a time after their infirmities, ignorance, and slowness of comprehension, seemed to throw

throw insuperable obstacles in the way.

Another argument illustrating the excellence of the christian doctrines, and consequently their divine origin and procedure from superintendent inspiration, may be deduced from their efficacy on mankind. This has been experienced in its banishing polytheism and idolatry; in the milder administration of government and the blessings of toleration, softening the miseries of war, polishing the manners and civilizing the dispositions of men.

In a state of nature, the human constitution is experimentally tinged with savage ferocity, our freedom from which we owe to religion, laws, and moral education. In a pro-

gressive state of society men have been fond of multiplying the Deity. Attributing the actions of the illustrious ancestors of mankind to certain persons of their own nations, they have been so dazzled with their splendor as to adore them as gods. Not to mention the various nations that honoured with religious rites the sun, moon and stars, the Egyptians worshipped beasts and inanimate things, and many countries had both their celestial and terrestrial gods. Many traces and remains of this polytheism disgraced, indeed, the age immediately succeeding the rise of christianity. Simon Magus first of all attempted to intermix the christian religion with paganism at the command and solicitation of

the emperor Claudius; who was inclined to reckon the Founder of christianity as one of his gods, being no stranger to the counsel given by Tiberius to the Roman senate, that Christ should be enrolled in the number of the gods: a mixture this of things too opposite in their nature, and which was attempted, but in vain, by other succeeding emperors. At length this disgraceful polytheism vanished at the preaching of the christian religion, as the dew at the rising of the sun; for in that divine institution mankind were taught the true nature of God, that it consists of his being the first cause of all things, and the supporter and preserver of all, and, consequently, requires that we allow of no more gods than

than one. His supreme dominion over the whole universe demands likewise our acknowledgment and belief of his unity. "He doth act according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." But if there were two or more gods, acting according to their separate wills, they might choose and do quite contrary things, so that the one would be opposed by the other, and hindered and prevented effecting what he had determined to do. This confusion is so clearly contradicted by the wise order in which every thing is conducted in this world by divine providence, and by the regular harmony of those parts of the heavenly region within our knowledge and sight, as well as
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by the principles of the christian religion ; that we must every where admit and confess, that one God alone ruleth over all. Thus has christianity triumphed over polytheism, the examples of whose gods were a disgrace to human nature, the principal of which was described as guilty of crimes shocking to men of reason and virtue. 'Tis not to be wondered that such men fled for refuge to revealed religion, where they found a proper object for their imitation in Jesus Christ, who is the lively example as well as the only fountain of divine knowledge and goodness.

Idolatry fell together with its parent polytheism, after having overspread the earth for many generations.

tions. Various were the causes that induced the men of those ages to cultivate the worship and adoration of false gods, or to give those honours to creatures, or the works of man's hand, which are only due to God; but all of them ceased upon the first preaching and reception of the gospel. This taught them, that every outward representation of the true God, as well as of a false God, was to be avoided; and for this reason, because the true God is incomprehensible, and cannot be visibly described. How can it be in the power of wood or stone to convey to us any adequate notion of the Almighty God? Where is the artist, however skilful and excellent in his profession, that can so work upon our minds as to

to induce us to look up to his workmanship for a similitude of our God, either in his wonderful works, or in his acts of mercy? To attempt a comparison of that, which our most exalted ideas cannot reach unto, must be the height of impiety. The duty required by the christian doctrine to this purpose, is, to give that worship to God which is suitable to his nature. Neither pompous rites and ceremonies, nor a difference of countries or places, affect or make any part in the pure worship of the Divine Being. He is a pure, ethereal mind, and therefore it is the highest impiety to represent and worship him under a corporeal, earthly substance. True devotion is modest and reserved in its demeanor; like charity

charity it doth not behave itself unseemly, is not ostentatious in words or actions, nor useth any vaunting expressions, but sensible of its many imperfections, enumerates its griefs and errors with resigned humility. And spiritual worship conveys the heart of a christian thus devout, beyond the limits of this world to the footstool of the throne of God. It neither stands in need of images or pictures to recal to memory the presence of the Divine Being, but in every act of religious worship it retains such a lively sense of the Almighty's inspection into its inmost thoughts, as is alone agreeable to his spiritual nature. If prayer and invocation employ the time of a christian, and claim his attention,
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the majesty of God, if properly reverenced, will instruct him in a decent behaviour and suitable devotion during the performance of those solemn exercises. If the virtue of dependence on God require exertion, his supreme dominion, goodness, and providence, are a sufficient incitement. As often as thanksgivings make a part of divine worship, he exalts his voice in them from a grateful sense of mercies received. Whenever his presumption should be curbed and fear introduced, the power of the Almighty presents itself before his eyes. He learns submission from his divine providence ; he is taught to put his faith and trust in God from his truth and wisdom, and he is instructed to love the Lord
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from his goodness. All these are acts of religious worship, that require the spirit and heart of man to join in them, in order to make them acceptable; and as neither image nor picture can distinguish their worth and value, so neither can they improve the performance of them to any greater degree of genuine devotion. Where religious worship was represented in this amiable light, both by the first preachers of christianity and the sacred writers, idolatry gradually lost ground, and the heathen world abolished their plurality of gods for the pure worship of the Divine Being. As soon as the pagan superstition was deprived of support from the powers of this world, it fell to the ground. No vestige

vestige of its worship is to be found, nor any mention of its doctrines but in books ; even when kings and emperors denounced their vengeance, and threatened the severest punishments in order to support paganism, it daily decreased, and its ruin cannot be imputed to force, or the power and influence of letters, the doctrine and speech of Christ being plain and simple ; nor to the efficacy of riches, the poverty of the apostles being a proverb ; nor to interest, since, on the contrary, all earthly advantages were to be overlooked for the sake of christianity, and its disciples were enjoined not to shrink from calamities, adversity, or death.

The christian doctrines have also had a very visible effect on the state

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and empires of the world, in meliorating their modes of government, extending to every individual the benefits of his proper sphere, abolishing the cruelties of war, a total end to which so much desired by every feeling breast may be expected from the concurrent aids of philosophy better understood ; universal freedom and extended commerce, and improving the morals and habits of mankind, so that every one is permitted to decide for himself in all concerns of religion.

A just and temperate government is generally attended with the correspondent good sense, moderation, industry and morality of the people, and these are productive of the greatest blessings as well as the noblest

noblest and happiest condition. By a comparison of ancient governments with the present, we cannot avoid seeing how much the preference is due to the latter. The tyranny of former times is annihilated, and the laws are executed with such a degree of mildness, that the human mind in Europe seems to have undergone a thorough change. By this meliorating change in mens' minds, individuals and nations pass from vice and barbarism to virtue and refinement. This alteration has been aecomplished by the progressive influence of religion. The principles of christianity are adapted to soften the most rugged natures, and console the unfortunate by future hopes under present evils. Let any num-

ber of men now conspire together in schemes of persecution, they would find every step they took contribute nearer and nearer towards defeating its end. The danger lies on the opposite side. Zeal, however intemperate, continues unmolested, and runs its career, till, like a ship crowding too much sail, it oversets and overwhelms all within its vortex. Happy is it where freedom of thinking in religious matters, as well as deciding and acting, is directed by moderation and judgment. Hence must flow true piety and christian principles, the recommendation and knowledge of which will operate with vital influence on the morals of men. To what therefore can we impute the unjustifiable determina-

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tion of a neighbouring nation, the generality of whom, while they are struggling to recover and fix on a stable foundation their undoubted rights and privileges, despising the absurdities and folly of popery, involve christianity itself in the same charge and accusation? For, amongst great numbers of them, all religion, whether it exists under the mild influence of the protestant branch, or is distorted by superstition, bigotry, or priestcraft, such as has been taught and practised in the church of Rome, is indiscriminately discarded and swallowed up in the wide ocean of atheism, and infidelity, and its power denied; as all rivers, whether conveyed through humble vallies, steep hills, or down

rocky precipices, are ingulphed in the unfathomable deep. It is with concern every christian must observe many persons, unhappily induced by the absurdities of the popish creed, to depart from the profession of the gospel. It is to be wished that men of their enquiring minds, who now rank themselves with unbelievers, will, in due time, find their objections answered, and submit to the evidence in support of the christian revelation. Much may be expected from a closer connection and intercourse with protestant countries, where a reciprocal league of amity and good offices is formed, cemented by a common interest, and confirmed by mutual benefits. The asperity of former ages may be thus lost

lost in the refined manners of modern times ; cruelty in war and mutual contempt in peace, which only distinguish barbarians, may be exchanged for a reciprocal exercise of humanity and courtesy, and by mutual intercourse each nation will more readily observe and cheerfully imitate the characteristic virtues of the other. They who decry the existing treaty with a neighbouring nation, nearly resemble Naaman the Syrian, who applying to Elisha to be cured of his leprosy, the prophet bade him go and wash in Jordan seven times, and his flesh should come again to him, and he should be clean ; which being so easy a remedy, no reasonable person, one would think, could object to it :

yet it seems the task appeared too light for him, and he could not conceive why the prophet particularized Jordan above the rivers of his own country, two only of which in his opinion excelled all the waters of Israël, as though there were any intrinsic virtue and a more healing quality in one of the rivers in question than the other, so that he performed the will of the prophet, shewed an obedience to the commands of the Almighty, and acknowledged his sovereignty over the whole creation. He was not, it seems, unwilling to make an experiment of the prophet's advice, provided it should be in one of the rivers of his own country; but as Elisha's injunction was at once decisive,

cisive, he returned from the habitation of the prophet in disgust, with a judgment formed beforehand without examination, determined not to partake of the advantages of any country but his own, and angry that the preference was not given to those of his own nation.

Whereas every nation under heaven being alike the work of God's hand, is equally the object of the Almighty's fatherly care and goodness. Though the creation abounds with a wonderful variety of productions, each adding proportionably to its beauty and use, it has seemed fit to Divine Providence, for wise purposes, to enrich one country with this production, and to fertilize another with different stores.

stores of his bounty, each supplying its share of the comforts of life, and to be received thankfully; at the same time contributing to the beauty of the whole, and attesting the beneficence of its Divine Author. But as it must be impertinent in the creature to define the purposes of the great Creator, as well as presumptuous for a finite being to explain the intentions of the infinite mind, it is only left to us to examine what good effects may result from these several causes by the agency of man, to apply them as they rise into maturity, and to bring about the completion of God's wonderful designs in his own appointed time. These orderings of Divine Providence may be the means of promoting

promoting universal concord and peace, dispersing a more enlightened interpretation of the scriptures, and carrying the knowledge of salvation, the doctrine of the Saviour of mankind, into countries that now lie in darkness and the shadow of death.

Every division of the earth claiming the same Lord and Father of all for its maker, experiences alike the daily proofs of his providence, protection, and kindness. The sovereign Creator confines his favours to no particular region, but with his cheering presence passes through, actuates and supports the whole frame of nature. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the

unjust ; pours his blessings indiscriminately on all, animates the sluggish face of the earth with his benign influence, and maketh it fruitful with the dew of heaven. And as he hath dispersed abroad with a liberal hand the inanimate productions, the fruits of the earth that are proper for food and pleasant to the taste, so he hath also enriched the mind of man with the noblest faculties, capable of maintaining its dignity in the scale of beings in which it is placed, and asserting its prerogative which it has exclusive of the rest of the creation. It is no impeachment of this divine appointment that so many abuse such excellent qualities, or that some appear to us to be involved in a very great

great degree of ignorance and darkness ; the former have not attended to the light of nature which is a sufficient guide in such matters, and the latter may, for ought we can discover, be as knowing and experienced as their condition requires, or their station admits of. “ God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” He regardeth not one more than another, but whether high or low, rich or poor, of this country or that, if he lives under an habitual sense and awe of God’s presence and inspection, and if not blessed with the knowledge of divine revelation, conducts himself strictly according to the law of nature,

ture, shall be a partaker of the divine favour and protection. But the just Judge of all the earth does not expect to reap where he has not sown, nor to gather where he has not strewed, but only claims an harvest equal to the abilities he has bestowed on us, and the various talents he has endowed us with. These he has not confined to any country, and it would be the height of absurdity and folly to despise a man as ignorant or void of virtue, only because he is not of the same nation with us. In the natural productions of the earth there is some difference; for notwithstanding every climate is blessed with sufficient to content the minds of the inhabitants, as well as to delight the imagination and

and afford convincing proofs of the bountiful hand of an ever-watchful Providence, yet the Almighty Sovereign hath dealt out to us in various order and degree the different productions of the earth, appropriating each to its particular climate, in their variety, beauty, and qualities, serving to increase our admiration and praise of the Author of our being and fountain of all our happiness.

If we could look into the hearts of men, we should find them, notwithstanding their being dissatisfied with their condition in regard to riches and worldly honours, entertaining a strong partiality for their own country wheresoever situate; for few or none enter into voluntary exile

exile for any real or supposed advantages in the natural, civil, religious, or political constitution of a country, unless it be to emerge from extreme poverty, or to escape a punishment consequent upon their violating the laws of the community they belonged to. The hardy inhabitant of the north would not sit still, and quietly hear you accuse his country as barren and uninhabitable, because you enjoy a more temperate climate and a more genial sun: he sees beauties in his frozen clime, which you, perhaps, unacquainted with such scenes, cannot discover, and finds means to enrich himself therein by traffick which you would overlook as not productive of the necessaries of life. Nor would

would it be matter of less surprise to the swarthy inhabitant of a sultry climate to hear you arraign its intense heat, which generates such curious and wonderful fruits, unknown to your own country, unless it be by an artificial resemblance of that which you condemn in his. The truth is, Divine Providence hath adapted the constitution of our bodies to the climate we inhabit, and fitted even our wants and desires originally to our situation. But as it would be invidious to fix the seat of learning or happiness in our own country, as it would be envious in us to appropriate the advancement of arts and sciences to ourselves, as well as malignant in this enlightened age to boast of superior advantages universally, either in the fruits of

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the earth or the progress of the human mind; so nothing forbids us reaping advantages from countries differing from our own in productions which they perhaps may excel us in. For what purpose the Almighty might have permitted the continuance of wars for so long a period to desolate two neighbouring kingdoms is foreign to our present consideration, and if we attempted it, we should be incompetent judges. The natural state of man is not that of war, but, on the contrary, that of peace and concord. The former is the cause of miseries, pains and grief; but the latter is productive of happiness, success in our callings, and all the ornaments attainable by the best cultivated society. To assert, therefore, that war is necessary lest the world

should be overpeopled, is to set bounds to the power of Almighty God in his carrying on the work of creation, as to attempt to vindicate the unavoidable cruelties and sufferings of war is to plead against humanity. Surely the Divine Being, who holds in his hands alone the power both of creation and preservation, would take proper measures in order to allot a just proportion of the human species to this habitable world, and could pour the tide of joy into the hearts of multitudes as well as of an individual. He who had the means in himself, and whose mercies are over all his works, when conversing with mankind in the flesh, did not confine his glad tidings to his disciples and apostles, but diffused happiness and

salvation amongst the many as well as the few ; and the apostle St. Paul has stiled his discourses, for the peculiar comfort and joy they conveyed to the hearers, “ the Gospel “ of Peace.” In so tranquil and calm a state the valuable ends of the gospel are best promoted : undisturbed by the jarring discord of war, it spreads its conciliatory exhortations and influence over the hearts of mankind. When the passions of the breast are no longer agitated by furious animosities, mutual injuries and sufferings, the voice of reason is heard, moderation is attended to, and commerce, promoting reciprocal benefits and frequent intercourse betwixt the inhabitants of distant kingdoms, encourages men to look upon

upon each other as descended from the same common parent, equally necessary to each other's happiness and comfort, and to love as brethren, be pitiful to the afflicted and unfortunate, be courteous to the stranger as well as the friend. These excellent precepts of the apostle have therefore found a larger field to expatiate in, and it belongs to man to put them in force, which the present times so happily favour above the past. But, besides encouraging the general harmony of the world, and good will amongst men, they give us reason to hope, a more rational construction of the holy scriptures will take place in those countries where superstition reigns so triumphantly, where the pure essence of the

Deity is dishonoured by idolatry, and a reverence is paid to beings that are not proper objects of reverence. It is well known, how strictly the common people in those kingdoms have been forbidden all enquiry in religious matters, and even to read the holy scriptures: a shameful obstruction to salvation this ! when the Bereans praise is upon record for searching the scriptures daily, and examining whether the apostle's doctrine was agreeable thereto. And what benefit can they reap from their attendance in the house of prayer when the liturgy is read in a language different from that of their country ? Besides these, the numberless unmeaning ceremonies their worship is loaded with, every

every one in direct contradiction to some established principle of christianity, together with the absurd, irrational doctrines of their church, have a direct tendency to alienate the mind from God, whose service is perfect freedom ; to annihilate the pure, spiritual worship of the Divine Being, and to destroy instead of perfecting the moral law. As the age becomes more and more enlightened, we have ground to expect these abuses will be remedied ; a toleration granted to the free exercise of our most holy religion ; bigotry hide its monstrous head in utter oblivion, and Protestantism established on the pure worship of Jesus Christ. And as example prevails confessedly as much, if not more

than precept, we may see this desirable plan extended into those countries that are immersed in a greater degree of darkness, and in the shadow of death. When they behold two rival nations united in bonds of amity and friendship, mutually sowing and reaping the several comforts of society, they must be convinced of the inutility and general miseries of war, as well as the blessings of peace and concord. By these means to spread the knowledge of salvation and a purer worship of the Deity, (to take it in no other point of view) will be performing a most acceptable service to our blessed Saviour, who was ushered into the world with this angelic hymn, “ Glory to God in the
“ highest,

“ highest, and on earth peace, good
“ will towards men.”

In the mean time let us remember, not to prefer the pursuit of the concerns of this sublunary state to those of eternity, nor, like those in the parable, make light of religion, and contemptuously or scornfully go one to his farm, another to his merchandize, lest the Almighty, provoked by so daring an insult, withdraw the pure spirit of christianity from our land, as he hath done from many countries that are now involved in dark ignorance of his worship, or extreme idolatry and wickedness. Let us consider that the kingdom of heaven is like unto an housholder who would hire labourers into his vineyard at different hours of the day;

day ; the housholder being Christ, who invites professors of his religion at different periods of the world, and who rewarded those at the eleventh hour equal to those at the first, which should be a spur to us, lest these, who are now so late invited, may outstrip us in our christian course. It may be, they will abide by their old superstition, not attending to the Lord in the parable of the vineyard, who utterly destroyed all those that slighted every means of grace. At the same time let us take especial care that the kingdom of God be not taken from us by reason of our impiety and wickedness of morals, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof ; but let it be our principal concern to transmit

mit the faith of Christ uncorrupted and unsullied to the latest generation.

Amongst the various blessings derived by the efficacy of the scriptures on enlightened nations, we must rank Toleration in religion. It is now generally allowed amongst Protestants that there is a natural right belonging to every man, and in some cases an obligation to decide for himself in all religious concerns. As man is by nature a rational being, he would deservedly forfeit this excellent prerogative if he was not to judge for himself; and if he tamely gives up his right of private judgment, and obeys any other authority than the gospel's in matters of conscience, he might as well give up

up his birth-right. The only case that is an exception to this, is, when the abilities of a man are so defective as to require the aid of others to lead him to truth. In all other cases man is competent to decide for himself. Neither nature requires it of him, nor revelation, that he should indulge a blind faith. The excellence of the gospel fears no extent, no progress of free enquiry. Though error and superstition may afford, and that justly too, a short-lived, momentary triumph to the deist and infidel, yet the unsatisfactoriness of their schemes will not prolong their triumph, as has been proved in the former part of this treatise; but all reasonable men will adhere to christianity, which, received and taught
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in its original purity, guides us in the best way of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. To the free and impartial judgment of men, Christ and his apostles proposed the evidences of their mission ; whether they related to prophecies or miracles, every thing was done in the most public manner, being convinced that the more the facts and proofs were examined, the more lustre they would acquire ; in consequence of which unbelievers have opposed and scrutinized very narrowly into them, and the event has been, that the evidences of christianity have maintained their ground ; when sifted to the bottom they come out the purest ore, and are consequently established on the firmest grounds of truth and righ-

righteousness. Few are the inconveniences attending public investigations of religion in comparison of the advantages by which they are at least counterbalanced: They rouse the attention to questions of the utmost importance, correct long established errors, diffuse the knowledge of the holy scriptures, and exhibit new arguments in support of religion. And equity demands that every man be possessed of a power to judge for himself in religious matters. For why should I usurp the authority of deciding for another? Even an inspired apostle disclaimed any "dominion over the "faith" of others. Why should I arbitrarily impose a rule for the guidance of my fellow-creatures in
matters

matters of faith or moral practice ?
Or why should I claim the exclusive
property of superior knowledge, di-
vine power and infallibility, who am
but dust and ashes like other men ?
Surely they who make these extra-
vagant claims over the consciences
of their fellow-creatures, do not
consider how benignant is the effect
of religious freedom on the com-
forts and morals of the world ; ad-
vancing and encouraging learning,
the free exercise of religion, good-
will, plainness of manners, and a
pious frame of mind. Where free-
dom of enquiry in religious matters
prevails, the effects of intolerance
are disallowed, or at least greatly
mitigated ; the mind of man is hu-
manized, his domineering spirit soft-
ened,

ened, and the freedom and happiness of mankind visible in the countenances of every one. The liberal and rational views of religion promulgated in their writings and discourses, diffuse the truths of salvation with peculiar recommendation. There is no harshness in their doctrines, and a liberal sense pervades their interpretations of controverted points and mysterious subjects. On the contrary, where freedom of enquiry is denied, the mild religion of Christ is clouded with a severity of aspect, and constantly inculcated in mystery and controversy, in open abhorrence of reason, and in misguided zeal and unrelenting persecution. No writings on religious subjects can pass without the strictest

exami-

examination, and an opinion unsanctioned by authority, delivered in a public discourse would bring down certain vengeance on the author. No civil toleration is extended by the state to individuals or bodies of different persuasions; a dreadful proof this, that the rights of conscience and religious liberty are not yet attended to in such countries, and a melancholy prospect of many years intervening before the people in power will allow the force and equity of every man being possessed of an inherent right to judge for himself in religious matters, and which all moderate and liberal persons must naturally wish to promote and introduce, together with a rational and tolerant spirit into their

K church.

church. May the efficacy of the scriptures, on mankind in general, be more and more visible; till toleration shine unto a perfect day !

Another argument to prove the superintendent inspiration of the New Testament, is the invariable tradition derived from the beginning of the christian æra, that the extraordinary assistance of the spirit was present at the composition of the evangelical writings. They were not only acknowledged from the very first as the real writings of those apostles and evangelists, with whose names they are inscribed, but they have also been handed down to us as the repositories of the oracles of God, the pillar and foundation of their faith. With regard to the authority

authority and fidelity of the four gospels, not a doubt has ever been entertained of their being received by the church from the very beginning of christianity. The same may be said of the fourteen epistles of St. Paul, epistles that both tended very much towards establishing the churches in the faith of Christ at first, and have also regulated the practice of religion in the successive ages ; and because there were many sects famous from the first rise of christianity, amongst whom the Gnostics were much distinguished, St. John wrote his gospel. Tradition has delivered this as a chief cause amongst others of his writings, in order to root out by his authority, which amongst christians must have

been confessedly very great, the poison that even then began to infect the church. The Gnostics had introduced into the pure and simple religion of Jesus a kind of divine processions or emanations, which had no other foundation but in their own imagination. To these and the like principles, so derogatory to the character of the world, it was necessary to apply an effectual remedy. It was necessary to call in the aid and authority of an inspired apostle to destroy it root and branch; it had accordingly the power of the divine Spirit to counteract its virulence. This and other heresies St. John saw it necessary to oppose, lest afterwards any future age should be unsettled in the true doctrine, but especially

especially the Gnostics, who reckoned amongst their emanations, the word, the life, the light, the only begotten and Saviour; and likewise asserted the Maker of the world to be one person, Christ another, and Jesus another. St. John therefore shews that all these titles agree in the one and same Jesus Christ; the other evangelists tacitly demonstrate the divine nature of Christ from his wonderful birth, his unlimited and uncontrolled power in working miracles, from his knowledge of the thoughts of others, from the circumstances of his death, resurrection, and ascension; finally, from the promise of his continual presence, of his sending the Holy Spirit, of his forgiving sins, of his judging all mankind.

kind. St. John was inspired to treat the subject otherwise ; he adapts his arguments to the exigencies of the occasion, appropriates the name of God to him at the very first, and openly assigns to him a power flowing from the divine fountain. Nor in this manner only, but by express comparison he prefers him first to John the Baptist, then to Moses, and after to Abraham. As this was the chief cause of his writings, so he was led by superintendent Inspiration to describe those actions of Christ, which had been omitted by the other evangelists amidst so great a multitude of miracles and discourses. These things have been handed down to us by tradition, and that of the most perfect kind, committed to writing, and contained

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in genuine and original volumes, the writers of which evince an ability equal to their design as well as incorruptness in the execution, so that even their drift and meaning are plain and evident to every unbiassed mind, and no topic of consequence can be misunderstood. With these valuable requisites tradition has handed down to us arguments for our believing that the Inspiration of the evangelical writers was plenary, viz. the strong and forcible expressions which Christ uses in describing the agency of the spirit upon the disciples, and by which they themselves represent its power on them and their converts. Nothing can exceed the spiritual aid promised by Christ to his disciples.

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That

That no defect of understanding may be an obstacle to the progress of the gospel, or want of fortitude be the cause of opposition to its success, they were assured of being supplied on every emergency with heavenly assistance. The divine Spirit was to give them wisdom and eloquence, bearing all before them with the force of truth. Both St. Matthew and St. Luke have handed down our Saviour's words expressly to this purpose: "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." But St. John has more largely

largely described the gifts of the Holy Ghost ; he was to endow them with all necessary knowledge, with the spirit of prophesy to dive into futurity, and fortify themselves against approaching dangers. His information extended to the afflictions that awaited them, the coming of Antichrist, the events that were to beset the Jewish nation and the church. In like manner as the agency of the spirit was so conspicuous on the apostles, so its effects were visible on the first converts to christianity. They who embraced the faith of Christ upon Peter's first sermon, were promised, upon their repentance and baptism, remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift was either internal,

internal, a confirmation on the faith and duties of christianity, and the restoring grace of the spirit, or else external, such as the gift of tongues and healing. The holy spirit, joined with baptism, in order to promote the glory of Christ, was also visibly conferred on other converts by the apostle Paul, who had indeed been before disciples of John the Baptist, whose commission did not extend to the declaring of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, nor the doctrine concerning it. This agency of the Holy Spirit superintending the apostles, is expressly declared by themselves : it was so undoubted a fact that St. Paul rests the credit of the christian religion on it as on a firm foundation. As the apostle's knowledge

ledge and discretion are undisputed, he would not have ventured thus far if he had not been certain of the truth, or else he would have injured the very cause he meant to support. The enemies of christianity, ever busy to oppose and discredit a scheme of religion reprobating their darling vices, would have overpowered the humble followers of a crucified Master, if there had been the least deviation from the strictest veracity. If any object to this assertion of the apostles, that they were parties concerned and interested in appealing so frequently in their writings to the agency of the spirit, we would ask them, For what purpose were they such strenuous advocates, and with what interested view did they thus attribute

attribute to themselves the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost? Not surely for the sake of profit or advantage, or to avoid imminent perils and losses, since they were obliged to forego all the conveniences of life, and suffer the severest afflictions and cruelties. The fear of God instilled a sacred regard for truth, and kept them free from falsehood. The copious precepts of piety they have left us, and their unblemished lives which their bitterest enemies allow, are sufficient to set aside all imputations of falsehood, if unbelievers should be inclined to insinuate it. If any one disputes the force of the argument drawn from the manner in which Christ speaks of the influence of the spirit

spirit on the apostles, or the inspired character themselves have given of their productions, it behoves him to bring more powerful arguments derogating from the credit of the sacred writings ; but if he cannot, the apostles' evidence of their own inspiration must be conclusive, and possessed of sufficient authority to command our belief.

The last argument for the plenary superintendent inspiration of the holy scriptures that I shall enumerate, is, that they contain many things which the event proves to have been revealed from heaven.

There are many prophecies interspersed in the evangelical writings of things which could not be discovered by the mere force of the human

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man mind, but which the event, the best interpreter of prophecy, has sufficiently confirmed. These are the sudden and extensive progress of religion, its perpetual duration, its rejection by most of the Jews, and reception among the Gentiles ; the hatred of the Jews towards the disciples, the severe punishments and sufferings to be endured for its sake, the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the great calamities of the Jews. Under the parable of the leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened, were prophesied the progress and increase of christianity. The prediction of Christ's seeing Satan fall like lightning from heaven, is likewise

wise to be referred to the astonishing velocity of the propagation of the gospel through the earth, in order to destroy the false superstitions and all the works of Satan. In the parable of the vineyard, is represented the refusal of the gospel by many of the Jews, as is the same wonderful dispensation of God in the parable of the wedding. The same parables, as also that of the prodigal son, foretel the readiness of other nations to embrace christianity. Our Saviour comforts his disciples with a promise of extraordinary aid to counteract the enmity and persecutions they should meet with from the Jewish nation. And in the same chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, he forewarns his followers of the punishments

nishments they would undergo in the course of their ministry. The destruction of Jerusalem is also foretold by two evangelists in various places, as well as the extreme calamities of the Jews, who through so many ages, and such different countries, have suffered such violent persecutions and destruction by the sword, that their very existence is miraculous, particularly when we consider the vast bodies they form in all the known countries of the world. It will be a pleasure to me, hereafter, to plead the cause of this oppressed people; in the mean time suffer me to hope the day is not far off, when they shall contribute towards making one fold under one Shepherd Jesus Christ, which the chosen

chosen generation of Jehovah shall be ready to embrace the christian doctrine adorned by prophecy, inculcating the justest precepts of virtue, promising the most noble reward. Besides this, must be added these illustrious proofs of divine power inherent in Jesus; his being seen alive by many after his passion, his visible ascension into heaven; and besides, the power of casting out devils, the most inveterate diseases healed by his name, and the gift of tongues imparted to his disciples; all which Jesus himself promised beforehand as signs of his supreme power, and of his possessing that kingdom from whence alone divine inspiration can proceed. The nature, therefore, of prophecy being

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that it be made by divine inspiration, such writings as the evangelists, containing an authentic description of future events fulfilled in their due season, deserve the reputation of being divinely inspired, and establish their own credit and authority.

Thus have I endeavoured to demonstrate the plenary inspiration of the New Testament by rational deductions, and, I hope, I have not swerved in the least article from reason, that most excellent gift of God. They who will not hearken to its dictates, may, without a violent breach of christian charity, be said to be prejudiced against their best guide, and to forfeit that most distinguished glory of the human race, the character of rational creatures.

And,

And, all things considered, reason will appear the best guide in matters of religion, but then it must be reason duly improved and cultivated; for there are gradations in reason as well as in other mental endowments; the more extended it is, the greater discoveries it makes of Providence and divine knowledge in the works of nature; for to reason, rightly improved, we owe our uprightness, strength of mind as well as body, and those excellencies that deserve admiration. They who search the scriptures with humility, right views, and in a candid, unbiassed manner, will perceive from the apostles' original imbecility of understanding the necessity of their heavenly guide to lead them into all

the truths of salvation ; and without this aid much less could they have successfully preached Christ crucified, and evidenced the high descent of their commission by the exercise of miraculous powers. And, as an additional proof that the gospel contains a plain and perfect discovery of the divine will, they introduced a complete system of morality, superior to every thing of the kind before or since advanced, comprehending within it the true nature of worshipping the Divine Being, and describing the greatest of all motives to a godly life, the doctrine of a future life ascertained beyond all doubt, and confirmed by the resurrection of Christ, which event he himself foretold to his disciples.

Written

Written tradition hath also lent its powerful aid toward supporting this great argument for the divinity of the christian religion. The credit that is due to this is of no inconsiderable moment. For from hence we learn that the christians of the second century after Christ, celebrated an anniversary festival in commemoration of the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles. There has besides been an uninterrupted tradition, that the extraordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit was present to the evangelists in their composing the sacred writings. To all which we must add the many prophecies, which nothing but inspiration in the most plenary sense could deliver, the fulfilling of which is as

exactly described by the evangelists and other sacred historians, and reason forbids us to doubt their veracity in the least tittle, if we allow that a God of truth will support the cause of truth. Amongst other superior and less fallible sources of grounds of evidence for the christian religion, we must rank inspiration, or that impression made on the mind of the apostles by the Divine Spirit, which gave a convincing and indubitable evidence of the truth of every circumstance relative to their writing the Gospel; nay, it would supersede the usefulness or the necessity of other proofs of the christian religion, conveying to the mind and comprehension of every lover of truth the knowledge of God and eternal life,

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provided it has faith for its basis and foundation. And no man ever guided his steps in the way of truth without the knowledge of God; no man was ever properly instructed in the nature and attributes of the Divine Being without the doctrine of Christ; no man ever understood and received the end of Christ's mission without the aid of the Spirit; no man ever was impressed with the gifts of the Spirit without faith in the christian revelation. So powerful and convincing to the serious and inquisitive christian is the evidence arising from the superintendant inspiration of the holy Scriptures, that, whilst he endeavours to fix his faith by lesser marks of veracity, this eclipses all, as a traveller, captivated

ted with the shining morning star, follows its beauteous ray with immoveable eye, till the sun, rising in sovereign majesty, darts a superior splendor, and it is irrecoverably lost.

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R

Go through, go through the Gates; prepare you the Way of the People, cast up, cast up the Highway, gather out the Stones, lift up a Standard for the People, Isa. lxii. 10.

Omnis docendi Ratio, cum in Schola turn in Ecclesia ita instituenda est, ne aut cum Doctrina poenitentiae pugnare, aut conscientiis afflictis consolationem & spem suam adimere videamur. Zanch. Tom. 7. p. 440. Theol. Argent. Conf.

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M. DCC. XXVI.



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THE PREFACE.



AND there are, doubtless, under a form of profession, who are far from looking upon divine truths, and eternal things as the great concern of their life. With the common form of christianity, and some dead superficial notions of the principles of religion they are satisfied. There is nothing in the following sheets that can afford them any pleasure, unless their fancy may flatter them into a sort of delight in what may look unto them like uncommon.

A 2

But

But to please empty professors, or gratifie inquisitive fancies, is not the design of the work.

In subordination to the honour of the God of truth, the following endeavour has a principal regard unto the distressed condition of wounded consciences.

Some of God's poor children, who

Ifa. 1. 10. walk in darkness, and labour under the weight of insupportable guilt, and

Pslxix. 1,2. sink into the deep waters where there is no standing, being ready to conclude it impossible for them to get out of the deeps, and to get over the difficulties, which, by the common interpretation of some particular texts of scripture, are thrown in their way, may by the blessing of God, find some relief administered.

The thoughts of a possibility of falling away, after tasting of the heavenly gift, and of the impossibility of a recovery, have been always attended with slavish fears and dreadful terrors, so far as entertained in the minds of those, who are concern'd in earnest about

bout salvation. Many have cried out, in bitter agonies, that now they were past all recovery, there remained no more sacrifice for them, they had sinned a sin that must end in eternal death without remedy; so drawing a dismal cloud over the glorious gospel, over the full and free grace of God revealed therein, and over their own comfort and usefulness.

It is not my design to make any sin look little, nor to lead any poor soul to think himself a little sinner, and therefore to take courage because sin is no such great matter as is pretended, nor himself so great a sinner as may be suggested: no, let sin in its exceeding Rom. vii.
13. sinfulness appear, and let the man according to his duty look upon himself as exceeding vile and sinful throughout by nature and practice; let all the aggravating circumstances of his sins be duly weigh'd and consider'd; and as the chiefest of sinners, let him cast himself upon the all-sufficient saviour. Hof. xiv. 1.

The PREFACE.

The texts explain'd in the following treatise, have been under misconstruction, a dreadful bindrance of faith unto many; but, it is hoped, it will appear unto the considerate impartial reader, that there is nothing in 'em to discourage the poorest, vilest sinner from venturing himself by faith upon Jesus Christ for everlasting life. Let his sins be never so great and many, let his condition be never so bad and unhappy, there is not a syllable in the texts consider'd, nor in the whole Bible rightly understood, against his present venture upon Christ by faith for life and glory.

In the work it has been thought sufficient to assert and explain the truth, without taking much notice of the variety of disagreeable thoughts, here, with humility laid aside. When truth stands discovered and established, what is not so will vanish in course. 5 JYGI

In the whole, the reader will find nothing but the faith once deliver'd to the saints.

saints. No new principles advanced, but old truths explained. No words, nor expressions in the least strained beyond their native scriptural signification. That which may at first seem to be forc'd into a service it did not intend is παραδειγμάτων, whether a putting of Christ to an open shame, or making a publick example for the benefit of others, be most agreeable to the etymology, nature, and intent thereof, let the godly learned judge. That persons of great abilities have wandered in great uncertainties about the meaning of the word must be acknowledged. A great master of languages professes his dissent from the thoughts of others, and then dislikes his own upon it *. That it does properly signify making a publick example is what the learned allow, and indeed what the derivation thereof necessarily requires. That such an example, in all its requisite branches, is made in

* Hen. Steph. Dissert. de Stylo N. Testamenti.

publick evangelical repentance for sin is very evident. Let any person never so much adhere unto the more common interpretation of the word, as signifying the exposing of any person or thing, as worthy of the greatest hatred, contumely, reproach, or disdain, let him but carry it to the sin or sins, whereof it was supposed such persons might be guilty, and to the persons themselves guilty of such sins, and the whole interpretation stands consistent. Under renewed recourse to the blood of sprinkling for evangelical

Job xl. 4. peace after backslidings ; sin shall by
 Psal. li. 4. Ifa. vi. 5. such penitent persons be exposed as ex-
 Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. ceeding hateful, and testified against as exceeding sinful *. They shall not only abhor sin, but themselves also on the account thereof. You shall loath yourselves in your own sight. Indignation and revenge in their due place belong to evangelical repentance.

* Δέξεσθε τὰς αἰματίαν ὅντως μεμίσκηται παραδειγμάτων αὐτῶν καὶ θραυστών ὡς αἰχματῶν ὑπέρεως.
 Naz. Orat. Περὶ τῆς Βαπτίσμος. in Budæo.

It is indeed granted, that the texts as now explained, look with another face than they use to do, under the generally delivered and received interpretation. But it is enough to me that they appear in their native beauty, and go hand in hand with the whole gospel of the grace of God in a consistent style of instruction and encouragement.

As to the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, there is, I hope, a fair scriptural account given of it. In no instance could the Jews manifest so much hatred against Christ and the father, as in blaspheming and reviling the eternal God in the person of the Holy Spirit. By the Eternal Spirit, God discovereth himself to his people, by the same spirit he worketh mightily in the souls of his people. All manifestations of love, all applications of redemption, all operations of grace are in a peculiar manner attributed unto the Holy Spirit. To call him, by whom the father and son are made known in supernatural and divine operations to the children of men ; Beelzebub
the

The PREFACE.

the prince of the devils, and that at such a time when divine power and goodness must with the greatest evidence shine upon their consciences, should surely be thought the greatest instance of hatred against God in his three glorious persons, that could be found among sinful men.

Joh.xv.24. *They did see and hate. The impossibility of committing that unpardonable transgression under the present dispensation, I hope, is evidently demonstrated. My apprehensions of the matter, I have endeavour'd to deliver in the greatest plainness and simplicity, according to the best judgment I could make of the mind of God in the scriptures. As I don't think any man bound to believe what I have said, any farther than he sees a fair foundation for it in the word of God : so I don't think my self bound to make any other apology to justifie my attempt, than that according to the sacred word of truth I have writ mine own thoughts, and not those of other men.*

Erasmus having translated Athanasius upon the blasphemy against the Holy

Holy Spirit, dislikes his judgment, prefers that of St. Austin, and his followers, that there was no sin unpardonable, and attempts to confirm it, in offering his own thoughts, that Christ in the words spoke only hyperbolically; and, for entertaining different apprehensions from those that were common, takes sanctuary in the unfathomable depths of sacred scriptures, which continually call for and encourage farther search. His words upon that occasion, I do with all readiness take up, and make use of upon this, as very rational and ingenuous. Hæc pro mea portiuncula in medium attuli, si quis quid habet melius communicet. Divina scriptura venas habet inexhaustas, semper erit quod scrutemer *.

In the word of truth there are heights and depths eminently profound mysteries, which are beyond all the endeavours of the most enlarged minds in this world to comprehend; but they are all such as call

* Eras. ad lectorem inter Opera Athan. P. 532.

for

Prov. ii. 1-6. for and still encourage a holy, humble disquisition. To the glory of wise grace it must also be acknowledged, that the Prov. vii. 8. book of God abounds in plain and necessary truths, which lye open to any christian of the meanest capacity. But by reason of satan's temptations, who has 9. from of old laboured in the art of perverting scripture, and remaining darkness, together with a spirit gendring to bondage under misapprehension, and misapplication of some particular texts, even such as do not seem to be attended with much difficulty, some of God's dear children have been terrified unto a very dreadful degree. I shall in this preface instance only in that of **H E B. xii. 17.**

Mal. iii. 16. Some who thought on the name of the Neh. i. 11. Lord, and desir'd to fear him, have from thence, under their own dark apprehensions, put themselves in Esau's wretched case: have thought they should never inherit the blessing, tho' they desired it; that they should never have evangelical repentance, tho' they sought it carefully with tears. In the bonds

bonds of such a dreadful interpretation and application, some have many months, I might say years, been detained. But does the eternal God intend any such thing in the words ? not in the least : for whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written, That we Rom.xv.4. might have hope. And thro' grace evangelical hope even in this text is plentifully encouraged. Let the coherence be considered, in Ver. 15, 16. the apostle exhorts them to deliver themselves from those persons who were like by their opposition to the grace of God, by their uncleanness, or by their profane-ness to defile others: then immediately adds, For you know how that afterwards when Esau would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place for repentance, tho' he sought it carefully with tears. In which words the children of God are directed in their duty, and encouraged in their comfort.

1. Their duty is to reject all heretical, unclean, and profane persons, and never
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be sorry. Profane persons are bound to repent of their sins, and justify the church of Christ, which has faithfully rejected them; but the church is bound to stand by what they have done in the name of Christ, and no place for repentance should be found. Esau cryed and roared, and greatly desired his father would repent, that he had rejected him, but he could find no place for repentance in Isaac's breast. The people of God are bound to cast out the vile, the vain, and the profane, and not repent of it: for, as the ^{Ver. 22, 23.} apostle further argues, they are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. Indeed if those who are cast out by the godly, approve themselves afterwards by sound repentance, and an evangelical reformation, to be of the number of such just and heavenly persons, they may be readmitted, the church not repenting that they were rejected, but rejoicing that they are recovered. 2. In the words, the children of God are encouraged in their joy and comfort. The apostle tells 'em,

'em, that the blessing was sure to remain among them. Tho' the profane persons cast out of their community, may not only with-hold all that, which they seemed to assist 'em with, but rave and rage against 'em, persecute 'em, and endeavour by all ways and means to take away their blessing, and make them unhappy. But says the apostle, it is in vain; for as Isaac would not repent, but still confirmed Jacob, tho' hated by Esau, in the enjoyment of the blessing, so it shall be with you. The spirit of the Lord re- Hag. ii. 5.
maineth among you, fear ye not. Let your adversaries reproach and persecute you never so much, be not afraid of their revilings: still the blessing is with you, and not with them; tho' they may have as Esau the fatness of the earth. The gifts of God to you are without Rom. xi:
repentance: for you are not come to 29.
the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, &c. but you are come unto Mount Ps. cxxxiii:
Zion: There the Lord command- 3.
ed

ed the blessing even life for evermore.

Luk. xxiv. 25. It is a wonderful mercy to be bless'd with a sound judgment ; for poor souls who want it, often set up that for a terror, which indeed contains a treasure of evangelical encouragement. Therefore, let us implore divine direction, search the scriptures, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and under the conduct of the Holy Spirit all therein shall be found to the glory of the eternal God, directly and eminently useful to promote faith, comfort, and holiness.

With that view, the meditations on the grand design of Christ in coming into the world to save the chief of sinners are added, and together with the rest to the hands of the spirit of God, and to the consideration of the reader, committed by

5 JY 61

MATTHIAS MAURICE.



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HEB. VI. 4, 5, 6. Explained.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come ; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance : seeing they crucifie to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.



BOUT the middle of the third century ; now, near fifteen hundred years ago, this portion of scripture, which under divine assistance we shall consider, was forced into a cruel, incompassionate service by *Novatus*. He affirmed, and did draw many disciples after him, that those who had, thro' slavish fear, complied with false worship in a time of persecution, should never be received upon repentance into the favour and commu-

Acts xx.
30.

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nion

nion of the church again. Unto this text, he, and his followers had a constant recourse as an impregnable proof of their unmerciful principle.

The *Roman* church, not being able at that time to defend the truth to their own satisfaction, against the edge of this text, as it was urged by the *Novatians*, resolved, to abide by the truth of Christ, in receiving poor back-sliders, upon their evangelical repentance, and deny the text it self, and with it the whole epistle wherein it lies, as being no part of the word of God.

¹*Rom.* iii. 3, But though there was such a cloud drawn over it, the text, together with ^{4.}*Mal.* xlvi. the whole epistle remained still the infallible word of God, and accordingly, ^{Heb.} viii. 1. Christ Jesus, the sun of righteousness, being the sum and substance of it, dispersed the cloud, and appeared there, with *healing* in his wings, and made the epistle to the ¹*Theff.* ii. *Hebrews* shine, not as the word of man, ^{13.} but as it is indeed the word of God, working mightily in such as are made thro' grace to believe.

Upon this, several of the servants of Christ, undertook to explain, and vindicate the truth and glory of this part of sacred scripture: some attempting to find out the *key* of the whole text, in the

the very first word of it ; understanding by Αδύνατον, not a thing utterly impossible, but only that which is very hard and difficult ; which interpretation is embraced by some in our day. Others, thought to remove the *difficulty*, in distinguishing upon the word *repentance*. Others, not being satisfied therewith, have sought to untye the *knot* in the words, *enlightned*, and to *renew* ; taking the word *enlightned* for being baptized, and judging the apostle meant that it was impossible, or, inconvenient that such persons should be baptized again with water.

But after sometime the word παρεξέρνεσθαι, which we render, *falling away*, was fixed upon ; as if the blasphemy against the holy spirit, mentioned Matt. xii. or some sin inseparable from final *apostacy*, was intended thereby. The other parts of the text have been made to correspond according to the various judgments of interpreters in latter ages.

Those who have been assertors of the possibility of the final defection, and eternal damnation of true believers, have imagined a full proof of their principle in this portion of holy writ.

Some of those who believe the certain perseverance of all true believers in a state of grace unto the end, have thought

HEB. VI. 4, 5, 6. Explained.

indeed that by being enlightned, and tasting the heavenly gift, &c. true, or saving grace might be intended, and consequently have understood the text taken together to be a commination, or threatening, wherein, upon the supposition, the inference is true; but neither the one, nor the other shall ever certainly come to pass. *Quid si cælum ruat?*

But for the most part, those who assert the doctrine of unalterable grace, do also affirm, that the description of persons, under the several qualifications, mentioned in the text, does not exceed the common endowments of heart, lip, or life, whereunto hypocritical reprobates may attain. Accordingly every part of the text is explained as expressive of that, which is really short of conversion to God, and faith in Christ. How dreadful this interpretation has been unto many of God's dear, tender-hearted children, I need not stand here to consider.

Our present business shall be, under help obtained of God, to attempt the explication of the place, agreeable unto the nature of what is expressed therein, and according unto the analogy of faith, without casting the least contempt upon the persons or thoughts of others.

In the words we have to consider, (1.) The persons described. (2.) What is supposed concerning such persons ; they may fall. We read it *fall away*. (3.) What is affirmed concerning them upon that supposition : *it is impossible for them to renew again to repentance*. (4.) The reason of such impossibility. *Seeing they crucifie, &c.*

According to this order, we shall proceed in opening the text, therefore our first work shall be an impartial search after the true state and condition of the persons described therein.

What satisfaction in their own minds, those servants of Christ attained to, concerning this portion of scripture, who have asserted it a possible thing, for unconverted persons to shine under a full conformity to all the branches of the description in the text ; but an impossible thing to bring them into their former state, or into a better one, upon a supposition of their falling away from their open profession ; I am not able to determine. That they have left others short of satisfaction is, unto me at least very evident.

I am not so vain as to think, that what I have to offer will satisfie every inquisitive mind, concerning the true

<sup>1 Pet. iv.
10.</sup>

meaning of the holy spirit, in every part of the text before us. What affords the greatest satisfaction unto my own mind, shall with humility and faithfulness be imparted. All others have equal liberty with my self to think as they can.

It seems unto me clear, beyond contradiction, that the apostle, by the persons described in the text, means *true believers*, or persons by *regeneration*, in a state of grace, in order to glory. In this thought am I confirm'd, (1.) From the consideration of the tendency of gospel-doctrine. (2.) From the coherence of this portion of scripture. (3.) The consideration of what they are to be renewed unto. (4.) From every particular in the description.

<sup>Rom. x.
17.</sup>

<sup>Phil. i. 6.
Ps. cxxxviii.
8.
Mat. xii.
20.</sup>

(1.) The gospel in its true nature, is a suitable means to *beget* faith, and to *increase* it. Faith comes by hearing. Where the work of faith is begun, it shall be carried on. The Lord will not forsake the work of his own hands. The bruised reed he will not break, nor suffer it to be broken, nor shall the smoaking flax be quenched. As his mercy, faithfulness, and power support faith; so the gospel throughout is so consistently ordered and disposed by his wisdom, that all and every part thereof does appear eminently proper and suitable

as

HEB. VI. 4, 5, 6. Explained.

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as a means to *strengthen* the weak hands, and *confirm* the feeble knees. It does constantly and consistently speak to them that are of a fearful heart, weak and feeble believers, *be strong, and fear not.* Isa. xxxv.
For whatsoever things were written a-⁴ fore-time, were written for our learning, that we thro' patience, and comfort of the scriptures, might have HOPE. Do Rem. xv. we not find our dear Lord, rebuking one⁴ of his beloved disciples, on the account of his unbelief? *Oh thou of little faith,* Mat. xiv. wherefore dost thou doubt? do we not^{31.} find others commended, and recorded for our examples in believing? *Oh wo-* Mat. xv. ^{28.} *man, great is thy faith.* Is it not the manifest tendency of all the precepts and promises of our Lord, to remove all slavish fear, and promote faith altogether? what else does our Lord mean, when Luk. xii. he says, *Fear not, only believe?* is not Luk. viii. Abraham's faith recommended for our imitation, who staggered not at the promise^{32.} thro' unbelief, but being strong Rom. iv. ^{50.} in Faith, he gave glory to God? did not the apostle Paul send, under great concern of mind to the Thessalonians,^{1 Thess. iii.} that he might know how they stood, and flourished in faith? he professes it was like life to him to hear of their stedfastness therein. I need say no more, but that the gospel is given, and the spirit sent, that *the just might live by faith.* Rom. i. ^{16, 17.}

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This being the *consistent* design of the gospel, I must with submission, and humility acknowledge that I cannot reconcile thereunto that interpretation, which makes the description in the text to fall short of true grace.

I cannot with any satisfaction conclude, that to tell any poor soul, that he may indeed at present be *enlightned*, nevertheless, he may hereafter dwell in *outer darkness*, is the ready way to promote his evangelical peace. Nor can I think that informing him, that though he has *tasted of the heavenly gift*, yet the torments of hell may be his portion, can have any tendency to carry on his comfort. Nor do I understand how any person can imagine, that to tell him, he may indeed *partake* of the Holy Ghost, and yet at the same time may be under the *power* of the devil, and may be for ever with him, can be a proper method to strengthen faith. And I must be still at a loss to know how my affirming to any person that he may indeed *taste of the good word of God*; and yet have no interest in the precious promises thereof, can be any way suitable to help on the good work of hope. I cannot see how persons who take such a course as this, can therein be said to be the *helpers of the joy of God's poor, weak, and feeble children*. Though my acquain-

acquaintance with the children of God is but small, yet I have known many, who have labour'd and languish'd years under the bondage and burden of such an interpretation. Yea, I may add, that by reason thereof, some, have all their life-time been *subject to bondage*. But Heb. ii. 15. the gospel has another tendency, and this text another meahing and design.

(2.) The scope and coherence of the place make it plain, that believers, true believers only are intended here. The connexion of the words unto those foregoing sheweth us the apostles design. *For it is impossible*, &c. christians, I mean true believers, were in the foregoing verses call'd upon to press forward, and go on to *perfection*. Here Job vi. 15. we have one reason why they should do so. The apostle must speak of believers to believers, otherwise his argument concludes nothing. Can any person of judgment, considerately think, the apostle would have said, it is impossible to make a hypocrite again of a hypocrite turned apostate? can any person deliberately judge such a way of reasoning pertinent to the apostles purpose? it is manifest beyond contradiction, that he speaks to believers, and useth arguments with them (proper we must think) to promote their evangelical growth,

10 H E B. VI. 4, 5, 6. *Explained.*

^{1 Thess. iv.} growth in faith, and other fruits of the spirit. ^{2.} To tell 'em that they were hypocrites ; or, to tell them that persons who had changed their state of *hypocrisie* for that of an open *apostasie*, could not renew, or be renewed again ; would appear very foreign and impertinent ; ^{Heb. iii. 1.} for he judged them to be true believers, and would have them judge themselves to be such.

(3.) The apostle grants they had been partakers of *repentance* ; for, he speaks of renewing them A G A I N thereunto. I grant the scripture mentions repen-tance, which *Judas* had ; such as it was. When he saw that *Jesus* was con-demned *μεταμελεῖς*, he repented him-self, and wish'd he had not betrayed his master : his sorrow was not of a godly sort, but that which *worketh death*. But here the Holy Ghost hath carefully distinguished the repentance of the persons described in the text from that of *Judas*. He does not use the same word for both, nor is the same thing in-tended. *Μεταμελεῖς*, whereby *Judas*'s repentance is expressed, signifies no-thing but a bare change of mind ; whe-ther from worse to better, or from bet-ter to worse, the word in it self deter-mines not. But *μετανοία*, the word in the text translated *repentance*, always in

^{Matt. xxvii.}
^{3.}
^{2 Cor. vii.}
^{9, 10.}

in the new testament signifies, that of the right kind, which has true wisdom attending it; it is a repentance *not to be repented of.* * To renew them again to this repentance, plainly implies, they were once truly partakers thereof. Of true repentance none are partakers, but converted persons; therefore they are such who are here described by the apostle. To say, that persons, who never were at best but deceitful hypocrites, cannot renew *again* to repentance, can hardly be said to be a *sound speech* Tit. ii. 8. *that cannot be condemned.*

Prov. xv.
31.

(4.) The description given of them in the words invincibly proves the truth of grace in their hearts.

i. They are said to be *once enlightened.* Whereby the scripture leads me to understand their *regeneration.* Whether by once, we understand one point of time, or reality, certainty, and duration, it may according to the highest pro-

* Μετανοέιν propriè significat post factum sapere, & de errore admisso ita dolere ut corrigas: quod Latinis propriè significat *resipiscere.* Itaq; propriè nunquam ponitur nisi in *bono.* At vero μεταμόρφωσις declarat post rem aliquam factam *solicitum esse & anxium:* pro quo Latini dicunt *pantere:* atque id etiam usurpari potest in *vicio,* neque enim propriè complectitur vitæ & consilii mutationem in *melius,* sed simpliciter sollicitudinem quandam γένους (id est diffidentiam) exprimit, quæ facit ut rem factam seu bona seu mala sit, *infectum esse* velimus, etiam quum non est novo consilio locus relictus. Beza in Matt. iii. 2.

priety of speech, go along with regeneration. Persons are regenerated but once. It is a work not to be repeated. Our souls may be said to be healed, restored, quickned, yea, in a certain sense converted often ; yet, but once regenerated. Regeneration being wrought, is certain and durable. The soul that partakes of that priviledge, may fall into degeneracy, but not into a state of unregeneracy. Once enlightened. The wisdom of God is here to be observed, in giving unto us, this part of the description first. For, here the person is *passive*. He is enlightened, regenerated by the spirit of God in order to *act* spiritually ; as we shall find in the other parts of the description. Here the spirit of grace findeth the person in a spiritual sense dead, and by his almighty power createth in him a principle of life ; he findeth him in darkness, and maketh him *light in the Lord*. Illumination, and regeneration, in the scripture, are terms equivalent. Hence the apostle in this epistle to the *Hebrews*, puts the children of God in mind how they endured, after they were *illuminated*, or enlightened ; that is, regenerated, or born again. One great end of *Paul's ministry* was the conversion of poor sinners to God. He calls it opening their eyes, and turning of them from *darkness to light*. Yea, when

Pf. xli. 4.
Pf. xxiii. 3.
Pf. lxxx.
18.
Luk. xxii.
32.

Eph. ii. 1.
Luk. xv.
24.
Eph. v. 8.

Heb. x. 32.

Acts xxvi.

18.

2 Cor. iv. 6.

when he mentions his own regeneration, with that of others, he says, that God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, had shined into their hearts, to give them *the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ.* Upon this his soul is carried out with comfort, to bless the name of God, who had made him and others, meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in *light.* Christ is the *sun* ^{Col. i. 12.} ^{Mal. iv. 2.} of righteousness; the person into whose heart he *shineth*, and such a person only, may be said to be *enlightned*, or regenerated.

Others may have good, commendable and useful degrees of improved and enlarged *knowledge* and understanding; but according to the language of sacred scripture, enlightened they are not. To say, that Christ is the true light, that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world, is no more than to acknowledge that there is no man, in the world, *truly* enlightened, but by Christ. John ^{2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.} ^{Joh. i. 9.} was indeed a burning and a *shining light*, and the *Jews* were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. They seemed to Joh. v. 35. be glad of, and to acquiesce in his testimony and doctrine. But true light in themselves they had none. There is no doubt, but unconverted persons may pretend to be enlightened. But, *he that saith,* ^{1 Joh. ii. 9.} *he*

he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness, even until now. Those that kindle a fire, and compass themselves with sparks, may for a time walk in the light of their own fire, and at last

Matt. i. 11. lie down in sorrow. But the children of light, tho' they may for a time walk in darkness, shall find the Lord to be

Isa. lx. 19. their *abiding light*, and their God their glory. In Christ is life, and *the life is the light of men*. To speak of being *enlightned* by Christ, and yet not to have

Col. iii. 4. received Christ as our *life*, is a principle the gospel of Christ will never own. That Christ giveth unto all creatures their being, and unto the children of men, reason, and understanding, together with various degrees of improvement,

Joh. iii. 3. is readily granted; but that any are enlightened, besides those who are born from above, is what the whole current of the gospel denies. All unconverted ones are said to be under the

Matt. xi. 25. *power of darkness.* The things that are revealed to babes, are *hid* from them, while they remain in their unconverted state, tho' in other respects they may be wise and prudent. The things of the

1 Cor. ii. 14. spirit of God are *foolishness* to an unconverted person, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually *discerned*. Whatever his refined, improved notions of truth may be, the gospel never

ver tells us, that he is enlightened. To say that it tells us so, in the text under consideration, is to beg what will not be granted. An enlightened person, in gospel-language, is a converted person.

(2.) They being described as passive, under the enlightning regenerating operations of the eternal God ; in the next place, we find them in the *actual* enjoyment of their life and happiness. *And have tasted of the heavenly gift.* The words in the original are very emphatical, and will lead an impartial mind, immediately to conclude, that some very eminent gift of heaven must be here intended. That Jesus Christ is that unspeakable *gift*, seems unto me from the coherence of this place, and from the whole current of the gospel very evident *. Here, we actually enjoy him upon our regeneration ; for, until then persons are said to be *without Christ*. In that part of the description which immediately follows, we are said to be made partakers of the Holy Ghost. But here, it is plain Christ Jesus is intended. *God so loved the world,* Eph. ii. 12.
that he gave his only begotten son. Joh. iii. 16. Isa. xliii. 6.
I will give thee for a covenant of the peo- Isa. xlix. 6.

* Gustavisse donum illud cœleste, b. e. Christum qui de cœlo venit *Coccejus* in Loc,

ple,

ple, for a light of the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation to the end of the earth. Thus the father of old in very

Ia. ix. 6. faithfulness promised. *Unto us a son is given.* Thus the church of old in faith

Joh. vi. 31. acknowledged. *My father giveth you the true bread from heaven;* thus Christ

in the fulness of time testified. Therefore is Christ called that heavenly gift;

or *super-cœlestial* gift, as the word in the text may be rendered. And indeed

he may well be said to be super-coelestial, because, *he that cometh from above, is above all.*

Joh. iii. 31. No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man, which is in heaven.

Joh. iii. 13. It concerns us in the next place, to consider what it is to *taste* of this heavenly gift. All true reason will require a fitness, or a due disposition of the organs of taste, if I may use such an expression, in order thereunto. Even in a natural way, a gross *deficiency* therein, will render a person incapable of any agreeable experiment. *Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink?*

2 Sam. xix. 35.

However unto any degree of taste, life is necessarily pre-supposed. A dead person cannot taste any thing that may be put into his mouth. The application is easie; men by nature are dead in sins and trespasses. While they continue in

in that condition, whatever ordinary or extraordinary gifts they may enjoy, it is impossible for them, from the very nature of the thing to taste of the bread of life. The things of God are *spiritually discerned*. The taste of them is of a spiritual nature ; and in order thereto there must be a spiritual principle of life in the soul. To tell me that those persons do but taste, and that's all ; is to tell me that they are alive : and leads me to think that persons may truly and spiritually live, and yet die for ever. It is impossible to taste of Christ carnally : we do not know him *after the flesh*. The flesh profiteth nothing. He that tasteth in any measure, tasteth spiritually ; for the words of Christ are *spirit and life* : therefore he that tasteth, liveth in a spiritual sense ; and because Christ liveth, *he shall live also.*

^{1 Cor. ii.}^{14.}^{2 Cor. v.}^{16.}^{Joh. vi. 63.}^{Joh. xiv.}^{19.}

Again, tasting this heavenly gift does imply our *feeding* in some measure thereupon, and indeed the word in the text may signify so much *. So it is justly rendered, *eating*, in several places of the new testament. Christ is the bread of life, that poor soul that tasteth of him, or feedeth upon him, though never so

^{Act. x. 10:}^{Act. xx. 11,}

* *Ṛevedas* pro quo etiam Græci *mītrās*, dicunt non id declarat quod Latinum verbum *gustare* sed *nō edere* à *pa-*
γεῖν id est *veisci*, ac Cibum capere. *Beza* in *Act. x. 10.*

C little,

little, doth live, and shall live by him:

Joh. vi. 57. To taste, is an expression, the spirit of God has sanctified, whenever applied to holy things in the old or new testament, to signify our *communion* with Christ

Ps. xxxiv. 8. by faith. *Oh ! taste and see that the Lord is good.* Upon experience the

Song. ii. 3. church says, *His fruit was sweet unto my taste.* Yea, does not the Holy Ghost make it the very discriminating character of a true believer, whereby he is distinguished from all others, to taste

1 Pet. ii. 3. *that the Lord is gracious ?*

Moreover, to taste of that heavenly gift, is to receive Christ, as he is *freely given* of God. The soul that tasteth of Christ as a free gift, does so without bartering, or bargaining. He is made to see that he has nothing to purchase him :

Isa. lv. 1. *he comes without money, and without price.*

He cannot be said to taste of the heavenly gift, if he does not come esteeming his own righteousness *loss* and dung, which once he thought his *gain*. Without regeneration and faith, it is well known among God's children, and plentifully testified to in the gospel, there is no receiving of him thus.

I shall add, to taste of this heavenly gift, is to taste of him as *heavenly*. All the religion of unconverted men, under all their attainments, is *earthly* and *carnal*

Phil. iii. 7.

8.

Phil. iii. 19.

20.

nal like themselves. They are utter strangers to heaven, and any thing that is heavenly. Of the heavenly gift, while they continue unconverted, it is impossible they should taste. They must know something of heaven ^{Heb. x. 34} in *themselves*, before they can be said to taste the heavenly gift.

In the last place, I must observe, that to taste of this heavenly gift, is to taste of Christ so, as to judge him to be indeed that very *eminent* gift, above all things else that heaven could afford. And it is impossible to answer the words of the text without this. Whoever tasteth of this heavenly gift, will acknowledge that Christ is the *chiefest* among ten thousand. The church having tasted, testifieth that his mouth is most sweet, yea, that he is *altogether* lovely. Nothing of all this can any unconverted man be really acquainted withal. It is the work of faith altogether.

^{Song v. 10;}
^{16.}

(3.) It is said, they were *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*. That the third person in the blessed *Trinity*, is here meant, is readily and universally granted, among those who have true acquaintance with the divine mysteries. In what sense, according to the evidence of scripture light, persons may be said to be made partakers of the Holy

Ghost we shall briefly consider. That the spirit of God may give ordinary or extraordinary gifts unto persons, who may nevertheless remain in an unconverted state, is not denied. That he

^{Num. xxiv.} made use of *Balaam's tongue* is very

<sup>2 Pet. ii.
16.</sup> true, and that he employ'd the tongue of his ass, to rebuke the *madness of the prophet* is readily acknowledged: but,

that either the one, or the other, can according to scripture language, be said to partake of the Holy Ghost, must never be granted. It is not said, it is not intimated, it is not implied in any part of the word of God, that ungodly men, continuing ungodly, were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. No, a peculiar privilege of the dear children of God, stands before us in this branch of

<sup>1 Joh. iv.
13.</sup> the description. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit.* The con-

verted children of God indeed are made partakers of the Holy Ghost. In which expression we have a special intimation of the free, sovereign, and efficacious grace of God. They are made partakers of this precious distinguishing favour. They did not come at it by their own worthiness, labours, or endeavours. It was freely bestowed upon them. They did not make themselves partakers thereof, but were made such by absolute grace.

grace. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, *behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.*

Ezek.
xxxvii. 5.

Yea, herein the father of mercies appears not only sovereign and gracious, but infinitely *bountiful* in giving to his dear children. He does not only give, but giveth liberally. He does not put them off with the poor, perishing things of this world, but gives them his spirit; which in the want of all other things is more than enough. He anointeth their head with that oyl of gladness, and maketh their *cup to run over*. He does not only bestow upon them, what measure he pleases of the common gifts, or of the more special fruits of the spirit which always accompany salvation, but he maketh them partakers of the Holy Ghost *himself*. He *dwellmeth with you, and shall be in you.* Which words, as well as many others, must be understood of the *person* of the spirit, or they cannot be understood at all. The spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead, dwelleth in every believer. That his habitation, is an *ineffable* truth is readily granted; but that it is a *truth*, and a comfortable one, shall for ever by the saints be thankfully acknowledged. They are made partakers, not only of this, or the other gift, but of the Holy Ghost. And it is their fundamental distinguishing

Joh. xiv.
16, 17.

Rom. viii.
11.

Rom. viii. 9. ing character as christians. *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Carnal unconverted professors under all their blooming and flourishing attainments, are *sensual, not having the spirit.* From whence it is evident, that whoever is made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, is spiritual, and consequently must be esteemed a regenerated person. But further, to partake of the Holy Ghost is to partake of him as *holy*, and so experience his *sanctifying operations.* Wherever he dwelleth, he also worketh. He worketh faith, giveth repentance, begetteth love to God, promoteth prayer, subdueth sin, mortifieth the deeds of the body, and carrieth the soul to breath after the enjoyment of God. Indeed the person in whom he dwelleth, may for some time be suffer'd to back-slide, whereupon duty will in a great measure be interrupted, the hands weakened, and true comfort clouded ; nevertheless by the spirit in dwelling, a principle of life shall be maintained, and in the spirit's own time the work of holiness to the Lord, shall be revived. For, whoever partakes of the Holy Ghost, partakes of him as a sanctifier ; and consequently is among the *holy and the beloved.*

(4.) In the next place they are described by their having *tasted the good word of God*. By this good word of God, doubtless, is meant the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation *. In order to taste of this good word, there must be life, and spiritual sensation; or there will be no discerning of what is good or evil. There is no doubt to be made, but some poor, carnal persons, may with gladness receive some notions of the truth; and may with seeming readiness take up the profession thereof for a time. It is what we find in the scripture asserted; it is what we often see in our generation fulfilled. Persons with eagerness, and professed pleasure, may for a time also lay themselves out in vindication of the truth, who are unacquainted with the truth, *as it is in Jesus*. So ^{Matt. xiii.}_{20.} *Herod heard John the baptist gladly, and did many things.* So the stony ground hearers are said to receive the word with joy: are glad to be esteemed as good as their neighbours, and in as fair a way for happiness. But all this gladness springs from, and terminates in some selfish principle. They are not acquain-

* It is the word of God as preached in the dispensation of the gospel that is eminently thus called, Dr. Owen.

Phrasis sumpta est ex, *Esa. lvi. 7.* Quid suavius potest audiri, quam nos in Christo habere remissionem peccatorum, & esse filios Dei vivi effectos? *Coccejus* in locum.

ted with any soul satisfying *goodness* in the word of God, as separate and distinct from the selfish yet refined pleasures of a profession. But the persons mentioned in the text, tasted the word of God *as good*. There was that in the word, which was more precious to them than their *necessary food*. The word in its own goodness was tasted by them ; and on that account esteemed, more desirable

*Job. xxiii.
12.*

*Ps. xix. 10.
Isa. lii. 7.*

than gold ; yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb. The gospel bringeth good tidings of good, and as such they taste of it ; they understand it ; they experience pleasure and sweetness therein. No person in an unconverted state comes to this. Again, in tasting the good word of God, they taste it not only as it is good, but also as it is *the word of God*.

*1 Thess. ii.
13.*

The converted *Thessalonians* received the word, not as the word of man, but as it was *in truth the word of God* ; they experienc'd its power, they knew its voice.

Ps. cx. 3.

They became *willing in the day of that power*. It was a powerful word, it

Heb. iv. 12.

pierced their heart. It was a *good word*, it made 'em *willing*. Conviction of truth obtains the *assent* of the understanding ; manifestation of *goodness* the consent of the will. Both must be found in him that tasteth of the good word of God. Wherever this grace is found, according

cording to the whole current of the gospel, the person in converted.

(5.) The last part of the description is, that they *have tasted of the powers of the world to come*. By the world to come, I willingly understand the gospel dispensation; the days and kingdom of the *Messiah*. They experienced in their souls the powers of this world. Under this word may be consider'd the power of Christ, now appearing to their faith, as *conqueror over sin, hell, and death*. They see that help was laid upon one that is *mighty*. They believe, their *redeemer is strong*. They know him in whom they have believed, and know that he is *able to keep what they have committed to him*. They look upon him, as one *able to save to the uttermost*. His power to sustain the church, and uphold the creation, they sing and praise; they trust in him because of his *everlasting strength*. Also, the power of the spirit in *working faith*, they have tasted; the same power *carrying on the work of faith* in them, they have had some experience of. When ever they abound in hope, they know it is by the *power of the Holy Ghost*. His power in giving gifts, and commanding designed success to attend them, they are made in some measure wisely to consider. His power

Ps. lxxxix.

^{19.} Jer. i. 34.

² Tim. i.

Heb. vii.

^{25.} Ps. xxi. 13.

Isa. xxvi. 4.

Eph. i. 19.

Rom. xv.

^{13.} 2 Pet. i. 3

power in leading a poor soul into, and bearing him up under *foretastes* of glorious, eternal enjoyments, they have thro' grace some acquaintance with. Thus they taste the powers of the world to come.

In the whole of this account, I find *nothing* that can be said of any unconverted person in the world. It seems to be as glorious a description of a *saint indeed*, as any in the whole gospel. And I am perswaded, that if it had not been for some seeming difficulties, that lie still before us in the text, no christian in the universe would have thought otherwise. *

The only objection that is usually raised, with seeming success, against the foregoing interpretation, is ground-

* Cæterum obiter notandum est, quibus elogii evangelii cognitionem insigniat, vocat *illuminationem*: under sequitur, cæcos esse homines donec Christus qui lux est mundi, illis affulgeat. Vocat *gustum doni cœlestis*: quo significat supra naturam & mundum esse quæ nobis in Christo conferuntur: & tamen *fide gustari*. Vocat *participationem spiritus*: quia is est qui unicuique distribuit prout vult, quicquid est lucis & intelligentiæ: sine quo nemo potest dicere dominum Jesum, qui nobis aperit oculos mentis, quia patefacit dei arcana. Vocat *gustum dei verbi*: quo significat non quovis modo illic manifestari dei voluntatem: sed quæ *surviter* nos delectet. Vocat postremo, *gustum virtutum futuri seculi*: quo significat nos *fide* quasi admitti in *regnum cœlestis* ut beatam immortalitatem quæ sensus nostros latet, spiritu cernamus. Thus the great and dear *Calvin*.

ed upon a turn of thought on what follows in ver. 9. But beloved we are perswaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, tho' we thus speak. As if the apostle had said; beloved, by the persons described in the 4th and 5th verses, we do not mean you, nor such as you are. You are not in our esteem to be numbred among them. We are perswaded better things of you than all that comes to. By being enlightened, and by tasting of the heavenly gift, and partaking of the Holy Ghost, and tasting of the good word of God, we do not mean any thing that accompanies salvation. Tho' we thus speak, we do not speak as if we intended you should think yourselves to be of their number. They are unbelievers that we mean, as before described; but we are really perswaded that you are true believers in the *Messiah* of God,

Answ. 1. To what purpose then are they mentioned? if by the persons described, the apostle means *unbelievers*; and at the same time was sufficiently perswaded they were *true* believers to whom he did write, and doubtless would have them esteem themselves such, thro' grace; I would fain see the *design* and scope of the expressions, as

as pertinent unto his purpose, solidly
sa. lxv. 15. and sufficiently accounted for.

2. I do humbly conceive it must prove a difficult task thoroughly to reconcile the minds of God's dear children, cast into the mould of gospel language to such seeming *absurdities* of expressions, as this objection must maintain. Some persons taste of the heavenly gift, Christ Jesus, but we hope better things of you: some are made partakers of the Holy Ghost; but we are perswaded better things of you; some taste of the good word of God; but we entertain better thoughts of you; are such expressions, that I cannot with any satisfaction perswade my self the apostle would have uttered.

<sup>2 Tim. i.
13.</sup>

3. Let any person considerately read the verses over, observing their *coherence*, and the objection vanishes. The case is very plain unto any intelligent unprejudic'd mind. The apostle in ver. 8. had been speaking of *thorns and briars*, which some professors in a backsliding, useless conversation brought forth; then immediately in ver. 9. says, we are perswaded *better* things of you. Better things than thorns and briars. Better works than such as shall at last be burnt. For you have shewed labour of love

<sup>1 Cor. iii.
15.</sup>

love towards the name of God. *Ver. 10.*
And we desire every one of you to shew
the same diligence unto the end, *ver.*
11.

The persons being found to be true
believers in the Lord Jesus; in the
second place we are to consider what
the apostle supposeth concerning them,
ιν παγμέσωντες, which we render, *if
they fall away.*

The doctrine of the saints *perseverance*
in a state of grace, has been faithfully
asserted, and eminently defended by
many of Christ's dear servants. This
expression now before us, has *nothing*
in it against that glorious soul---reviving
truth. It is true, our *English* transla-
tion says, *if they fall away*; so the *Welch*,
a syrthiant ymaith, but the word does
not require such a turn. Therefore o-
ther translations, whereof I have seve-
ral by me, keep to the *very word* of the
Holy Ghost; if they have fallen; or, if
they fall, only turning the participle
into a conditional verb. *Tremellius* in-
deed renders the *Syriack* who have sin-
ned again; agreeable to the meaning of
the Holy Ghost in a good measure,
tho' not a strict translation of his word.
It is well known that the word signifies
nothing but merely *to fall*, or fall *beside*;
whether the fall be greater or lesser, the
word

word determines not. Some indeed have judged that the preposition increaseth the signification ; others have been pleas'd to entertain a contrary thought *. However, our sins against God, and our sins against each other, go under that denomination. We read indeed of temporary believers, who in time of temptation fall away. So we read of *a falling away*, the apostle said must be, between his time, and the second coming of Christ. But the expression us'd by the Holy Spirit, in both the places, is of a *different* nature from that in the text before us. Concerning the falls of believers we may observe,

i. The *possibility* of them. Those who know what it is to be took by the arms and taught to go, know also what it is to fall, when in any measure left. The unchangeableness of God, the immutability of his counsel, the glory of his covenant, the fullness of his grace, the redemption in Christ, and the inhabitation of the spirit render the eternal condition of the saints secure ; but temptations from without corruptions from within, well known and experienc'd inabilities to withstand the least

* Præpositio *παρα* minuit rem cui in compositione jungitur.

trial, together with continued and multiplied instances, to our grief, make the possibility of our falls very manifest. *For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.* ^{Prov. xxiv. 26.}

2. The falls of believers are *of themselves*; they being naturally inclin'd thereunto. Scripture and experience make this very evident. They are not necessitated or compelled to fall; but they have within them a heart that is bent to backslide. Whenever *Israel* falls, ^{Hos. xi. 7.} *it is by his iniquity.* ^{Hos. xiv. 1.}

3. Tho' they fall, they shall not utterly be cast down. He shall not perish ^{Joh. x. 28.} who is in the hands of Christ. It is supposed indeed that even such a person may be suffered to walk in darkness, and in the difficulties and dangers of such a walk, may have many a fall; but, tho' he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, *for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* ^{Ps. xxxvii. 24.}

4. Let believers fall never so low, they shall arise. How low a child of God may be suffered to fall, is an inquiry, not only difficult to determine, but foreign to our present purpose. That he may fall very low is from the word of God very clear; but that he cannot, that he shall not fall out of God's everlasting favour, and lose a freely given established interest in the covenant of ^{Isa. liv. 9.} grace ^{10.}

^{Deut.}
xxxiii. 27.
^{Ps. cxxxvi.}
23.

^{Micah vii.}
8.

^{Ps. lvt. 13.}

grace is very evident unto those who have ears to hear what the spirit saith unto the churches. For, *underneath are the everlasting arms.* Our Lord remembers us in our low estate. Yea, let it be never so low. He has prepar'd a new song, fill'd with special instruction, for the use of his children, in such a condition. *Rejoyce not against me, oh mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.*

5. To be kept from falling is in many respects an unspeakable mercy. It is impossible to express the dismal consequences of some of the falls of the children of God. The name of God unjustly reproached, the mouths of the adversaries against the precious cause of God, profanely opened, the hearts of the godly grieved, and their hands weakened, the person's own peace disturbed, or what may be worse, his heart hardened, his bones in a spiritual sense broken, and his strength diminished, his mind for a cheerful, ready compliance with duty unfitted, and so for greater falls prepared are some of the bitter fruits of a backsliding conversation. *Thou hast deliver'd my soul from death, wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living;* is always a prayer

a prayer in season encouraged from this consideration, *that God is able to keep us* Jud. 24. *from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*

6. It is the duty of every child of God to watch and pray that he *enters* Matt. xxvi. *not into temptation.* Let him that ^{41.} *thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he* 1 Cor. x. 12. *fall.* The children of God should beware *lest they fall from their own sted-* 2 Pet. iii. *fastness.* An inward decay of religion ^{17.} will speedily betray a person into visible falls in outward conversation.

7. When a child of God has fallen, it is not in *his power* to get up again. He can sin indeed; that is, he is weak enough to be guilty thereof daily. He is *weak* enough to fall; but not *strong* 2 Cor. iii. 5. enough to stand. To get up is a good work, but he is *not sufficient for a good thought.* To fall is a plain indication of weakness, and by falling the soul grows weaker still. By repeated falls sin gathers strength, and the new principle of evangelical life languishes.

8. Tho' it is not in man's power to rise, and repeated falls put it still more out of his power, yet it remains his duty to *remember from whence he has fallen, repent, and do the first works.* Rev. ii. v. No weakness in us can alter the perfect law of God, nor deliver us from an un-

D change.

changeable obligation of obedience thereto.

Lastly, it is in the power of God, and in his power alone to uphold and restore them that fall. It is the Lord that upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. He says, I will heal their backslidings. And David sung, he restoreth my soul.

Pf. cxlv. 14.
Heb xiv. 4.
Pf. xxiii. 3.

We thus conclude ; all that with any evidence appears in the supposition before us, is the possibility of a believers fall, and that perhaps unto a great degree ; and according unto the design of the apostle this supposition was wisely drop'd ; that from thence the *Hebrews* might consider, how necessary it was they should with all diligence in the use of all appointed means go on to the perfection of faith and repentance, *in so doing, they should never fall.*

2 Pet. i. 10.

We may now briefly look upon what the apostle affirms concerning them upon the supposition of their having fallen by their iniquity, whether to a lesser, or a greater degree. *It is impossible for those to renew them again to repentance.* I do not question, but the word *impossible* may admit of various acceptations. That by an impossible thing sometimes a thing very difficult to be done,

done, at other times a thing not convenient to be done, and in other places a thing that we would not have done, or will not do, may be intended, is readily granted. But where there is no reason to the contrary, we always chuse to retain the native signification of a word. So I take the word here to mean that which is impossible in a proper sense, *ex virium defeciu*, a thing above power, and beyond strength. That which is said to be impossible, is for those to *renew them again to repen-*
tance. The vulgar translation renders the expression in a *passive* sense *, that it is an impossible thing they should be *renewed* again to repentance. So does great *Beza* †, which turn is without any foundation, but not without dangerous consequences if duly considered. The verb is *active* ||, and so it is justly rendered in our translation; it is impossible for those to renew. The word, which in the construction, the Holy Ghost has in wisdom left to be understood, without all peradventure must be *themselves* ‡. So that he who runs may

^{|| Avaxai}
^{riçev.}

* *Rursus renovari ad pænitentiam.*

† *Ut denuo renoventur ad resipiscientiam.*

‡ The construction of the word is defective, and must be supplied *&c* may be added, to renew *themselves*; it is not possible they should do so, or *tivag* that some should,

D 2 that

may read, that it is impossible for true believers, who fall by their iniquity, to renew *themselves* again to repentance.

Luk. i. 37.
Mat. xix.
26.

The eternal God indeed can renew them again to repentance; for, it is recorded, that *with him* nothing *shall be impossible*. *With men this is impossible*, but *with God all things are possible*.

Let not the least thought be entertain'd, that seems to eclipse the glory of his power and grace to heal backsliders. But poor fallen man cannot restore himself. How the *truth* of this appears, and how *pertinent* it is to the apostles purpose, we may briefly consider.

Rom. v. 6.
Hof. xiii. 9.

i. The truth appears, if we consider what man is by nature. Not only without power, or disposition to spiritual acts, but under utter inability to perform moral ones. We are said to be *without strength*. That is, without any degree of it. *Israel had destroyed himself*. Whatever proud vain thoughts the children of men may entertain and uphold concerning them-

that any should renew them; and this I judge to be intended. Dr. Owen in Loc.

Acte dicit *ανανείν*, renovare ad p̄nitentiam, subaudiens *εαυτός*, ut seipso iterum renovent. Pareus in Loc.

selves;

selves; the oracles of God testify that all of them are by *nature dead in trespasses and sins*. Dead in a spiritual sense, and consequently must be thought altogether uncapable, while in that state, of performing any thing spiritually good.

The strength which God hath provided for, and given to those who by regeneration, are brought out of that state of death is not committed unto them, nor doth it dwell in them. He putteth no such *trust* in his saints. *Help is laid upon one that is mighty*. Strength they have indeed, but it is not in themselves.

Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. Paul in a wonderful manner testifies, he could do all things; but then immediately tells us, it was by Christ which strengthened him. He did work abundantly for God; and yet he says, it was not he, but the grace of God which was with him. He thought well of Christ, and esteemed all things loss and dung for the excellency of his knowledge; yet he says he was not sufficient to think any thing. He lived in a spiritual sense, yet he says, *not I, but Christ liveth in me*. Christ told us, that without him we can do nothing. To convince us thoroughly of this, sometimes he calls us to undergo, uncommon trials, to en-

*Job v. 15.
Pf. lxxxix.
19.*

Phil. iv. 13.

*1 Cor. xv.
10.
2 Cor. iii.
5.*

Gal. ii. 20.

Joh. xv. 5.

counter with uncommon difficulties, and to perform uncommon duties ; thereby he leads us to see where *our great strength lies*, either by suffering us to fall under the burden, or go thro'

Psl. lxxi. 16.

with it in the *strength of the Lord God*. Sometimes in our ordinary course of danger and duty he is pleased for wise ends in some measure to withdraw his special influences ; and so far we fall. So far as we are suffered to fall, tho' it cannot strictly speaking, be said that we are weaker, being before without strength ; nevertheless, it may in a safe sense be said that *our bones are broken*, that our souls languish, and it may be, in strictness of speech, asserted that our sins are grown stronger ; as *habits* are strengthened by *repeated acts*. The soul being fallen, may be said indeed to be sick and weak ; yea, his very desires after a recovery, are under sickness and weakness also. While he yet stood, it might be said of him, that he was not able to keep himself from falling ; how much more, now he is fallen, every grace of the spirit in him languishing, and every corruption flourishing, may it not be said of him that he cannot renew himself again to repentance ?

Psl. 8.

2. This is not only a truth, but a *seasonable* one, and very *pertinent* unto the

the apostle's purpose. He had just before reprov'd 'em on the account of non-proficiency. When for the time they *ought to have been teachers*, they were yet but hearers of a low degree. He calls upon them to go on to the perfection of repentance, and faith, not laying *again the foundation* *. Unto this, spiritual diligence in the use and improvement of all appointed means is required. The necessity of such a careful, diligent, improving course of christianity appears from the consideration of that readiness there is in man, yea in the best of men to fall ; and, when diligence is dropp'd, falls will inevitably follow. It is a possible thing for the greatest saints to give way to degeneracy and fall ; but when they are down, they will find it an impossible thing for them to renew themselves again to repentance. *Wherefore* ^{2 Pet.i.10.} *the rather, brethren, give diligence, to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things you shall never fall.* In order to promote their diligence in all duty, let them always remember, that when they are fallen by their iniquity, it is not in their power to recover themselves again, God alone can do it, *Wherefore my beloved, work out your* ^{Phil. ii. 12,} _{13.}

* Knatchbull in Loc.

own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will, and to do of his own good pleasure. How long the Lord may suffer a poor fallen creature, with his broken bones, to lie in that condition, his own sovereignty must determine. Therefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

1 Cor. x.
12.

Pf. li. 10.

In all the apostle says, there appears a consistent thread of coherence in observing still the truth of grace in their fallen, and in their renewed state. Therefore does he mention a renewing them *again*, and a renewing them again to *repentance*. Create in me, a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. To have spoken of hypocrites, their hypocrisy, and their apostasy in this place would have been nothing to the apostle's purpose: for, he was speaking to believers, of believers, and what might befall them, what was *possible*, and what was *impossible* for them, what was their *danger*, and what their *duty* accordingly.

Thus far, through grace, our way has been straight and clean; the last thing that lies before us to consider, is the reason of that impossibility mentioned in the text; *seeing they crucifie to trem-*

themselves the son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,

Supposing these words signify the nature of the sin, or sins of the persons described in the text, they don't in the least overthrow any part of the foregoing interpretation. It is impossible to render a sufficient reason why they should signify *final apostasie*; or, the *unardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*. Their crucifying to themselves the son of God afresh, plainly intimates they were guilty of it *before*; of final apostasie a person can be guilty but *once*: the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit it cannot be, for it is a sin against the *son of God*. Our Lord tells us, that *all sins and blasphemies* against him are pardonable. Supposing that *any* ^{Matt. xii.} sins may be said to crucifie the son of ^{32.} God afresh; *all sins* may be said to do so, and, as they are more or less publick, put him to *an open shame*. All ^{Ezek. xvi.} sins are a manifest indication of wickedness and weakness inherent. Their falls make it evident, that they cannot rise. Do you see persons, who have by faith, tasted of that heavenly gift Christ Jesus. Crucifie him afresh, by their sins, and bring a publick reproach by their falls, you may clearly from thence infer their *weakness*, as well as others,

others, and that it is an *impossible* thing for them to *renew themselves* again to repentance; therefore they have good reason to watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. The same power that gave repentance to an *obstinate* Jew; can recover and renew a poor *backsliden* Gentle.

But, with deep and unfeigned regard and respect to the names, and works of those who have thought or took it for granted, that by the words, the nature of the sin of total or final apostasie is signified; I do, I hope in humility, and not without good reason, apprehend that quite *another* thing is intended. A long current of thought, and riveted apprehensions, may make a contrary glance seem strange. Nevertheless, let every assertion be brought to the fire of God's word, where all hay and stubble shall be burnt up, and as it abides the tryal, let us receive it. Weigh it in the balance of the sanctuary, and where it is found wanting, reject it.

^{29.}
Jer. xxiii.
1 Cor. iii.
33.

The spirit of God, in the expressions now under consideration, does signify unto us, not the nature of *that sin*, whereof 'tis supposed they might be guilty; but, the nature of *their duty*, which upon the supposition of that sin they were

were bound to be found in, but had no inherent power to perform.

I suppose it will be granted, that the very words of the Holy Ghost, so near as they can be rendred, run thus. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gitt, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, *and they falling*, to renew *themselves* again to repentance, *crucifying* to themselves the son of God afresh, and *making a publick example*.

In the promise of true repentance to the houte of *David*, and the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, *Zech. xii. 10.* two things in a special manner are found, (1.) A looking to him, whom they had pierced. (2.) A deep *mourning* for him. Both these things freely offer themselves to our view in the words of the text.

(1.) Here is a looking unto him, whom they had pierced; *crucifying* to themselves the son of God afresh. All true repentance flows from faith in exercise, on a crucified saviour. The soul must not only see himself a sinner, but must see his sins upon a crucified redeemer, or he will never arrive at evangelical repentance not to be repented of. He must look upon Christ as bearing his

Isa. liii. 4.
5, 6.

<sup>1 Pet. ii.
24, 25.</sup>

his sins, *in his own body, upon the tree*, or he will remain, tho' distracted with the weight of guilt, a stranger to evangelical grief. He cannot mourn *after a godly sort*, any farther then he mourns in believing views of the wonderful love of Jesus in bearing his sins, and *dying* in his room. We are beseeched to be reconciled to God, for he hath made him *sin* for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God

^{1 Pet. i. 2.} in him. The blood of Jesus must be sprinkled upon the conscience; or there will be no repentance from dead works.

^{Heb. ix. 14.} The soul must be helped by faith to make some application of Christ crucified unto himself, or else he abides impenitent. Poor backsliders upon their return must crucifie to themselves the son of God afresh; they don't crucifie him *to others* and reject him, but crucifie him *to themselves*, and receive him. They come with their wounded consciences unto the *wounds* of the redeemer, under a sense of all their guilt and vileness, they apply to themselves the *blood* that cleanseth from all sin.

^{1 Joh. i. 7.} They determine to know nothing, they determine to make known nothing but

^{1 Cor. ii. 2.} Christ, *and him crucified*. They attend unto the good things spoken by the *blood of sprinkling*. For the perpetual relief of poor backsliders, the lamb of God

<sup>Heb. xii.
24.</sup>

God

God is represented standing in the midst of the church *as a lamb that had been slain.* Wherever the gospel is duly preached to poor sinners, there Christ before their eyes, is evidently set forth crucified among them. In this sense, Gal. iii. 1. Christ may be said to have been crucified at *Rome*; which perhaps, is the most agreeable interpretation of Rev. xi. 8. *. And wherever he is received by faith, he is received in the soul as Christ crucified. The soul is helped to confess his sins over the head of that sacrifice. And under repeated guilt contracted, he is bound to take the same course. As he has received Christ Col. ii. 6. Jesus the Lord, so he is bound to walk in him. By renewed acts of faith he is to make application of Christ crucified Gal. ii. 20. to himself afresh. By faith we constantly see our selves crucified with Gal. vi. 14. Christ. And by the cross of Christ we are crucified to the world, and so made truly sorry for our sinful conformity to it. I need say no more. It appears very plain, that by crucifying to our selves the son of God afresh, is meant,

* Quod si adverbium istud (*ubi*) accipiatur propriè de urbe *Roma*, tum verbum crucifigendi accipendum erit per tropum, videlicet metonymiam subjecti, pro eo quod est, crucifixus esse *predicatus* est: quo sensu accipitur. Gal. iii. 1. Schol. Piscat. in Apocal. xi. 8.

Rev.vii.14.

according to scripture language, renew-ed and repeated recourse to the *blood* of his crois by faith, for pardon, peace, holiness, and comfort. We wash our robes, and *make 'em white in the blood of the lamb.*

2. Here is a deep *mourning* for him ; expressed by *making a fullick example* : we say, and put him to open shame. But the Holy Ghost in this word, makes no mention of H I M. In the original, it is but one word, which can't be well expressed by any one word used in our language. To *exemplify* comes nearest it *. But making a *publick example* for the benefit of others, is the very meaning of it. The Holy Ghost makes use of it, *Matt. i. 19.* where it is rendred to make a *publick example*. Παραδειγμάτισιν and παραδειγμα τοῖσιν are of the same signification †. A paradigm or example is that which is proposed as a *pattern* or rule for others to follow or imitate ‡. The word in it self does not in the least signify any

* Augustinus in *Epist. 59. ad verbum vertit exemplare.*
Teste Beza.

† Polybius παραδειγμα τοῖσιν pro παραδειγματίσιν dixit. Causab. Notæ in N. T.

‡ Παραδειγμα significat id quod exhibetur atq; ostenditur ut regula, seu documentum quo aliis instituantur qualia sunt exempla, &c. Leigh. Crit. Sac.

evil design in the persons concern'd in any action expressed thereby. Attending circumstances must determine the morality or the immorality of the action *. By the *Septuagint*, the word is often used for the *pattern* of the tabernacle shewn to *Moses*, and that of the temple by a special hand of God shewn to *David*, and deliver'd to *Solomon* for imitation.

Exod. xxv.

9.

¹ Chron.
xxviii. 11.

Here the penitent persons are said to make a publick example. Having by faith made application of Christ crucified to themselves afresh; in the next place, they make themselves a publick example of repentance. It is not said in the words, that they make a publick example of *him*, the son of God; but having crucified him, in a doctrinal, and a believing way to *themselves*, it follows that of *themselves* they make a publick example, and *put themselves to an open shame*.

In falling by their iniquity, they wound their own consciences, and the cause of God. To heal the wounds of conscience, they must crucifie to them-

* *Εἰτι μεγάλημα enarratio exempli hortantis vel deterrentis.* Beda in Budao. Two *μεγάλημα* are read of; the one *δεῖον* divine and most happy, the other *αἰσθόν*. Gale court of the Gentiles, Part 1. Book 3. Chap. 5.

elves

selves afresh the son of God, by renewed acts of faith, making application of the blood of his cross. To heal the wounds of the cause of God ; so far as their falls are publick, they must make themselves a publick example of repentance. And this includes,

*Josh. vii.
19.*

(1.) A publick *acknowledgment* before the church of the evil committed. (2.) *Self-denial* appearing in a willingness to confess the sin, give glory to God, and take *shame* to themselves. (3.) A *loathing* of the sin, and themselves on the account thereof. (4.) A holy *resolution* publickly expressed, to walk in the strength of Christ better for time to come. (5.) A *love* express'd to the Lord and his ways, and *indignation* against

*2 Cor. vii.
11.*

their own folly. (6.) A professed *dependance* upon free grace alone, thro' a crucified redeemer for all happiness for time and eternity. And herein they

Dan. ix. 8.

put themselves to an open *shame* and make a *publick example* to others for their instruction. (1.) That they may see how they all ought constantly to *watch and pray*. (2.) That they should in a like manner *repent* whenever they are suffer'd to fall. (3.) That the *grace* of God in receiving poor back-sliders may be truly and in a right way *exalted*.

True renovation after publick falls, consisting in those two great things, *viz.* a fresh application of the blood of Christ, and a publick example of repentance, no wonder the apostle should say that it was *above* our power. Faith is not of ourselves, it is the *gift of God*. Act. xi. 18;
Repentance flows from faith in exercise; and, it is God that *granteth* repentance Jer. xxxi. 18. unto life. *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.* It is not of him that *willeth*, nor of him that *runneth*, but of God that Rom. ix. 16. *sheweth mercy.*

But if any person should think that the word *him* should be added, as we have it in our translation; and not *themselves*, as we have affirmed; so that the reading should be a crucifying to themselves the son of God afresh, and making *him* a publick example; being understood in a good sense, it will not weaken our interpretation. For when we make Christ our publick example, do we not do so in order to *follow* him? and, so far as we apply the *blood of his cross afresh* to our wounded consciences,^{Joh. xiii.}^{15.}^{Joh. x. 4.} so far by the same spirit of faith are we carried out into a holy resolution to follow him, and make him a publick example, *not of scorn* and derision, *but of Rev. xiv. 4:*
holy obedience and imitation.^{1 Joh. ii. 6.} So far as such a holy resolution is prevalent, so far we are made evángelically sorry for

E our

our sins; are willing to profess publick repentance for publick crimes, and so make our selves a publick example to o-

^{1 Cor. xi. 1.} others to be followers of us, *even as we are*
^{Joh. xiii. 15.} *of Christ Jesus.* Ἐποδημα γαλι ἐδων
εὑρ.

From the text thus opened, we do observe,

That the children of God are partakers of great and distinguishing *privileges*, which the unconverted understand nothing of. They are made to differ from others. *Enlightned, &c.*

The distinguishing privileges of believers are so great, that in partaking of them, they partake of heaven it self in its *foretastes* or first fruits. *Tasted the heavenly gift, &c.*

It is a possible thing for persons, who are partakers of such peculiar favours, as are inseparable from a state of grace to *sink into flatness*, non-proficiency and negligence.

Upon way given to carnality and neglect it appears a possible thing for the children of God; yea, for those who are of note among them for eminency in evangelical attainments, to *fall by their iniquity.*

When any child of God is fallen from his stedfastness, into sin, it is his immediate duty to come for healing to the *wounds of a crucified saviour, crucifying*
to

to himself the son of God afresh ; and, according to the nature of his crime, he is bound to make a publick example in an unfeigned profession of *repentance*.

The work therefore of renewing himself unto true repentance, is so great that it is utterly impossible for him by vertue of any strength of his own, to effect it.

It is indeed possible for *God*, his word and works make it manifest, it is possible for God *only* to give renewed faith, and repentance unto his poor fallen children.

It is therefore the special *duty* of those who are fallen by sin to look unto the God of *all grace* for recovery, who hath said, *I will heal their backslidings*.

It should be the *special business* of all the dear children of God, who are helped to stand ; in all spiritual diligence, to aim at evangelical *improvement*, press towards the mark reach forth to the things that are before, and take heed lest they fall.

For, (1.) It is possible the *greatest* faint may fall, but impossible he should renew *himself* to repentance : the work being so great, so far above any humane strength, as has been opened, ver. 4, 5, 6. (2.) In diligence the soul is to expect a *blessing*. For the earth which

Matt. xiii.
11, 12.

1 Cor. iii.
13, 14, 15.

drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. Ver. 7. To him that bath, it shall be given. (3.) Careless unfruitful professors are disapproved in their work, and too much like the prophane world. But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing. (4.) All the thorns and briars, that any in a negligent course of profession may bring forth, together with all his hay and stubble shall be burnt up, ver. 8.

But we hope better things of you, and expect better fruits from you. Shew diligence unto the end; and, be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Thus we see, there is nothing of the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost in the 6th of *Hebrews*, nothing of final, irrecoverable apostacy, nothing frightful, nothing discouraging if rightly understood. Of what use this poor endeavour may be for the instruction and encouragement of God's children, must be left unto him who teacheth to profit.



H E B. X. 26. *Explained.*

For if we sin wilfully after that
we have received the knowledge
of the truth, there remaineth no
more sacrifice for sins.



H E coherence of the chapter is necessary to be consider'd in order to understand the words of the text.

1. In the four first verses the apostle declares the *insufficiency* of the sacrifices of the law. They were but shadows of better things, and could never make the comers thereunto perfect. If perfection had belong'd unto them, there would have been no need of the continuation and repetition of them. It was impossible such a privilege should attend such

^{Heb. ix. 12,} sacrifices. The *blood of bulls and goats* ^{13.}

^{Isa. xl. 16.} could not really take away the sins of men. Before the Lord God *Lebanon* is not *sufficient* to burn, nor all the beasts thereof *sufficient* for a burnt-offering.

^{Phil. ii. 6.} The eternal God being offended by sin, ^{Jer. xlix. 19.} a person in the *form of God*, who thinks it *no robbery to be equal with God*; must make satisfaction for sin; and that in ^{1 Cor. xv. 21.} the *nature* which had sinned, *for since by man came death, by man also resurrection unto life* must come. Then,

2. From the beginning of ver. 5. to the end of ver. 9. we have the account of a *greater sacrifice* in the foundation and nature thereof. The foundation is laid in the will of God. He

^{Eph. i. 11.} worketh all things *according to the counsel of his own will*. It was his will not

^{Ps. xl. 6, 7.} to accept of any sacrifice, but that of his own son. It was his will that his son

^{Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.} should offer up a sacrifice for sin. It was the will of Christ to comply. *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!* wherein

the true nature of a covenant may be seen. Upon this, the blood of Christ,

^{Heb. xiii. 20.} is called, *the blood of the everlasting covenant*. In order to this sacrifice, Christ had a *body prepared* for him; the divine nature strictly speaking being *impassible*, and the nature that sinn'd must suffer.

3. We have the *perfection* of that sacrifice insisted upon, from the beginning of ver. 10. to the end of ver. 18. By the will and counsel of God we were *sanctified*, or actually set apart for life ; everlasting life to be enjoy'd thro' the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. And by *one* offering Christ hath Heb. x. 14. for ever *perfected*, all that were by the will of God so *sanctified* or set a-part. The priests under the old testament did daily *stand* in their repeated ministrations ; signifying that they were always *short* of perfection ; but Jesus Christ after he had offered up himself, for ever sat down on the right hand of God ; signifying that the work was *finished*. Un- Heb. x. 12. to this Paul says, the Holy Ghost by Jeremy had a regard, when he said, Their sins and their iniquities will I re- Jer. xxxi. member no more. The perfection of the 33. sacrifice from that promise is fairly in- ferr'd, for where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin. ver. 18.

4. We have that glorious doctrine according to the wisdom of God applied.

1. For our *cheerful access* unto God. We have *liberty* to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a Heb. iv. 14. new and living way ; we have an high- 15, 16. priest over the house of God ; upon

E 4 which

which foundation we draw near *in full assurance of faith.* ver. 19, 20, 21, 22.

2. For our *constant profession* of faith before men. Faith in exercise, on Christ as all and in all for us to God, will make us forward, bright and consistent in our testimony for him to men. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* ver. 23.

3. This doctrine has a special tendency to *promote love and good works,* whatever the profane, carnal or selfish world may suggest to the contrary, *Pf. cxxii. 1. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.* ver. 24.

4. As in a particular manner promoting our *attendance* upon God in publick gospel worship. Where this doctrine is really believed, the soul will do all that he can to come to the publick assemblies of the saints; to wait upon God there. *Not forsaking the assembling of our selves together. &c.* ver. 25.

5. Upon the supposition of sin and backslidings, for in many things we offend all, this doctrine is applied for *Jam. iii. 2. the instruction of poor creatures under their repeated crimes,* ver. 26. being the text before us to explain under divine assistance; where, and in the fol,

following verses the duty of the saints at such seasons is more particularly clear'd. (1.) *Negatively*. They must not think of offering sacrifices. (1.) Because there remained no more sacrifice for sin. (2.) On the city in general, and on the temple in particular, the place of sacrificing, there was a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.
ver. 27. (3.) We have the reason of that fiery indignation on sacrificing worshippers, together with their place of worship.
ver. 28, 29, 30, 31. They trampled under foot the son of God. (2.) *Positively* what they must do. (1.) Remember how Jesus Christ as their heavenly inheritance, for in him all fulness dwells, had been every way made so precious to them, that for his sake they denied themselves, and forsook all things; and let 'em do so again. *ver. 32, 33, 34.* (2.) They must live a life of faith upon Jesus Christ, and the perfect sacrifice he offer'd. Not casting away their confidence, but going on in the constant exercise of faith upon Jesus Christ unto the very end. *ver. 35, 36, 37, 38, 39.*

Col.i. 19.

Thus we have the resolution of the whole chapter into its several parts.

Now it seems an easie thing to judge where about the text stands, and what is its particular design. *For if we sin wilfully*

wilfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. Where we have to consider,

(1.) The connexion. (2.) A supposition, if we sin, &c. (3.) The aggravation that may attend sin. (1.) It may be done wilfully. (2.) It may be done after the knowledge of the truth is received. (4.) An assertion, which in the face of all, the apostle will still stand by; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. As to what concerns the connexion, we may briefly observe that in the foregoing verse the apostle had, from the consideration of the perfect sacrifice of Christ, given unto them to understand how they should not forsake the assembling of themselves together. Whereby he would have them take notice, that it was not any business of *Jer. ii. 18.* theirs, to go into *Jewish assemblies*, offer sacrifices, or be present at offerings; but constantly wait upon the Lord in *Christian assemblies* and evangelical worship. For if we sin, says the apostle, there remains no more sacrifice. It will be but a *vain sinful oblation*. The connexion runs clear; for tho' we should be left to sin wilfully, all sacrifice is finished. Taking the causal connective particle *for*, in the same sense as it must be took in *1 Cor. iv. 4.* *For I know nothing*

*1 Cor. vii.
24.*

nothing by my self, &c. That is, for tho' I should know nothing by my self. For, *Paul* doubtless knew a great deal by himself on the account whereof to loath himself. Thus here, for tho' we sin wilfully, after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin.

What is supposed in the words, must now fall under consideration. The persons herein meant, may sin, may sin *wilfully*, may sin wilfully *after* they have received the knowledge of the truth, which supposition may refer, (1.) To sin in *general*, (2.) To some one sin more *particularly* aimed at in the text.

The persons concerned in the supposition are *believers*, I mean *true* believers who shall never perish. *Paul* knew himself to be one of those for whom Christ died. We have already observ'd ^{2 Cor. v. 1} on the chapter, that he writes to persons who were *illuminated*, and had ^{Heb. x. 32,} known in themselves that they had in ^{34.} heaven an enduring substance. He esteemed them real christians, and judged himself to be of that number, tho' he accounted himself, and was willing to be accounted *less than the least of all the saints*. He does not say in the words, if *unbelievers* sin wilfully be they professors or profane, but if *we* sin wilfully.

fully. How their having received the knowledge of the truth, confirms this interpretation we shall presently observe.

Of believers, it is supposed that they
^{1 King. viii. 46.} may sin. *There is no man that sinneth not.* ^{Eccles. vii. 20.} *Not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not.* It is what all christian experience acknowledges, its what the scripture abundantly asserts: no persons are so grossly infatuated as to deny it, but such as are deniers of ^{1 Joh. v. 18.} the real body of christianity. It is indeed said, that *whosoever is born of God, sinneth not;* but that expression must be taken in a certain limited sense, ^{1 Joh. i. 10.} for in the same epistle it is said, that *if* ^{1 Joh. ii. 1.} *we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and make God a lyar.* In many things we offend all.

Of believers it is supposed that they
^{1 Jam. iii. 2.} may sin *wilfully elsewhere,* the word ^{1 Pet. v. 2.} is rendred willingly; and so former translations express'd it here. It is used in scripture, as that which is opposite to *constraint* or *compulsion*; and, I humbly apprehend may be applied unto many, if not to most of the sins, whereof believers are guilty. No person in the world can truly say that he is compell'd to sin. It is well known that our wills languish under stubbornness, as well as our understandings under dark-

darkness. No christian in the world but will acknowledge that there is a great deal of imperfection and corruption in his will, and a great deal of his will, as corrupt, in every transgression. So that every sin he is guilty of, may be said more or less to be a *wilful* sin. It is indeed granted that every believer hath thro' grace, in his will a principle that *opposeth* sin: a principle that appeareth, and shall appear *for* God. Nevertheless there is in the will a *contrary* principle whereby the soul is often betrayed. These contrary principles in the will of a believer have by some of the greatest note in the church of God been called *two wills* *. Tho' the expression by some has been banter'd to *serve* a turn. The children of God under the teachings of the eternal spirit, find in themselves a *will to do good*, even when evil is present with them; and are *glad* of that work of God; and when they look back on sins committed, find that a *corrupt will* in them was therein concerned, and therefore are *grieved*, and loath them-

Rom. vii.
23.

Pf lvi. 5.

* Ita duæ voluntates meæ, una vetus, alia nova, illa carnalis, illa spiritualis configebant inter se, atque discordando dissipabant animam meam. Aug. Conf. Lib. 8. Cap. 5.

selves

selves throughout. He who cannot see that his will bears a part in most of his transgressions, *understandeth not himself*. He who cannot see in the scriptures many instances of saints, both under the old and new testament, who sinned willingly or wilfully, *understandeth not what he readeth*. The design of this is not to encourage sin in any degree, but to inform poor souls really concern'd about those affairs that they should not throw themselves, on the account of the corruption of their wills, *out of the number* of those to whom God will be *merciful*; but evangelically mourn before God on the account of *universal corruption*.

Moreover it is supposed in the words that persons may sin wilfully or willing-

Eph. i. 13. ly *after they have received the knowledge of the truth*. By the truth we are to understand that word of the truth, the gospel of our salvation. Christ Jesus,

Joh. i. 17. by whom came *grace and truth*, who is the way, *the truth*, and the life, being the sum and substance thereof. Of

Joh. xiv. 6. this truth, it is supposed, that they have received the knowledge. The word rendered *knowledge* especially with the article prefix'd, is very emphatical, and seemeth indeed to signify that knowledge of the truth which is eternal life,

or

or inseparable from it *. And by this Joh. xvii.3. knowledge of the truth we must understand,

(1.) The knowledge of the truth under the *peculiar advantages* of the new testament dispensation. There was a truth which all the types and shadows under the old testament held forth. Into some acquaintance with those *shadows* as containing the truth, or into some acquaintance with the *truth* as cloath'd with those shadows, the children of God were then brought. *But we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord.* The vail is taken away. The law came by *Moses*, but grace and *truth* by *Jesus Christ*. Now we are brought to know the truth, not as held forth in typical sacrifices, but *as it is in Jesus*. The apostle had said in the first verse of this chapter, that the law had a *shadow* of good things to come; and, in the text before us he tells 'em, that they had received the knowledge of the truth. *The body is of Christ.* Col. ii. 17.

<sup>2 Cor. iii.
18.</sup>

Eph. iv. 21:

* There is an emphasis in that word *πνη επιγνωσις*; the word is not used any where to express the mere conceptions or notions of the mind about truth, but such an acknowledgement of it, as ariseth from some sense of its power and excellency. Dr. Owen.

(2.) Special

(2.) Special acquaintance with Christ, under some *peculiar improvement*. Add to your faith virtue, and to your virtue knowledge. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. The promises of the new covenant encourage us to expect *increase* of true knowledge; even unto the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the father, and of Christ. The word here rendred acknowledgement is the same with that which in the text under consideration is translated *knowledge*, and in both places does signify true knowledge under some special additions.

Now of persons thus qualified, it is supposed possible that they may sin, *without* compulsion or constraint. I am far from thinking that it is *lawful* for 'em to do so; but all that I mean is what the apostle intends, that it is a *possible* thing for believers, believers under the new testament, who have received the knowledge of the truth, knowledge under some good degrees of improvement; to sin in *such* a manner. Indeed, whenever they sin, they are far from being compell'd so to do. It is what they do, at least in some measure, according to their own *choice*. There is a great deal of the will even in

in those transgressions which believers seem to be surpriz'd and hurried into. How much more in others, which they seem to act with so much *deliberation* and contrivance. If it cannot be said of them that they sin wilfully or willingly ; neither words nor things can be understood. This is the very truth concerning believers, and their sins in general ; faith and a tender conscience can make good use thereof.

(2.) We may in the next place briefly consider that sin in *particular*, which the apostle intends in the words. If we do but duly regard the scope of the chapter, which we have already observ'd, it will be no difficult matter to find it out. The apostle had before affirmed, that all the sacrifices of the law were laid aside as utterly insufficient, and now very impertinent. He had also declared how Christ by one sacrifice had for ever perfected that work. Upon this in *ver. 25.* he desires they would not forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some then was. Here it is plainly implied, that he would not have them frequent *Jewish assemblies*, nor *concern* themselves in their sacrifices ; for, if they did so, they sinned wilfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth. The particular sin meant in

F the

the words, was *offering of sacrifices* after the *Jewish* manner. That those believers who did so, might justly be said to sin, and to sin wilfully will appear

(1.) From their design and intention which was, to *sacrifice* for sin. Without considering it as a breach of rule, the expression will appear in some respect proper merely as applied to sacrifice. I say, in *some* respect proper, because there are other scriptures that bear it company in such an *interpretation* of the word. In many places under the law, by sin we must understand *sacrifice for sin*. Some places in the epistles of *Paul* must be so un-

Rom. viii. 3. derstood. *For sin* (that is, by sacrifice for sin) *he condemned sin in the flesh.*

2Cor.v.21. And, *he hath made him to be sin for us*; that is, to be a *sin-offering* for us. So the words of the text may run, for if we willingly sacrifice for sin, or make a sin-offering after we have received the knowledge of the truth, it will be but a vain oblation; for there remains no more sacrifice for sin. (2.)

The expression will appear proper if we consider how *greatly they sinned against God*, in adhering to the *Jewish*

Dan. ix. 24, worship and sacrifices. God had foretold that the *Messiah* should be *cut off*, and that he should *finish* the transgression,

26, 27,

sion, and make an end of sin, that is, of *sin-offering*, and should make *reconciliation* for iniquity, and bring in an *everlasting* righteousness; that he should cause the sacrifice and the oblation *to cease*; but this practice contradicts the eternal God, and gives him the lye. The voice came from the excellent glory, *this is my beloved son in Matt. iii. 17*; *him I am well pleased*; but, this practice declares that, that is not true, atonement for sin must still be made by *repeated sacrifices*.

In short, this practice *directly* disparages the active and passive obedience of Christ, as falling *short* of fulfilling the law, and satisfying the Justice of God, and *consequentially* denies him to be the *Messiah*. (3.) Such persons may very well be said to sin wilfully or willingly, because tho' what they do is under a *pretence* of divine *Isa. i. 12* worship, yet it is what God does not *require* nor approve. It may well be *Col. ii. 23* called wilful sin, because it is mere *will-worship*, God requireth it not, accepteth it not. Unto them he may say, as unto many others, under seemingly different circumstances, *who hath required this at your hands?*

I apprehend it would be no difficult task to prove that many of the children of God, especially in those

times while the temple yet stood, were guilty of such *wilful* sins against the *faithfulness* of God's promise, and the *fulness* of Christ's sacrifice. Many of them were ready to conclude, that they must be circumcised, and keep the law, for all christianity, or they could not be

A& xv. 1. saved. *They turned again to the weak Gal. iv. 9,*

10.

and beggarly elements, whereunto they desir'd again to be in bondage; and, observed days, and months, and times and years. Peter, was an eminent servant of Christ, and preach'd the gospel of Christ under the infallible conduct of the Holy Spirit, yet we know how insensibly

Gal. ii. 11. *Judaism crept upon him at Antioch,* so that he fell under publick reproof from *Paul.* With respect unto *Paul* himself,

it must indeed be granted that he la-

1 Cor. xv. 10. boured *more abundantly* than they all,

Act. xx. 24. and that the service of Christ was dearer

to him than his life; and, that he was, as is very probable, the greatest christian the sun has yet shined upon; nevertheless there is that to be seen in his conduct at *Jerusalem*, which requires more ability than I am master of, to explain and justify. The history of it runs

Act. xxi. 26. thus. *Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, enter'd into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for*

for every one of them. The thoughts of that eminent man of God, Mr. John Knox, upon this affair, I shall set down in his own words.

' I greatly doubt, *saith he*, whether either *James* his commandment, or *Paul's* obedience, proceeded of the Holy Ghost: we know their counsel tendeth to this, that *Paul* would shew himself one that observed diligently the very small points of the law, to the end he might purchase to himself the favours of the *Jews*, who were offended at him by reason of the brutes that were spread, that he taught defection from *Moses*. Now while he obeyed their counsel he fell into the most desperate danger, that ever he sustained before; whereby it was evident, that God approved not that mean of reconciliation; but rather that he plainly declares, that evil should not be done, that good might come of it. Evil it was for *Paul* to confirm these obstinate *Jews* in their superstition by his example; worse it was to him to expose himself, and the doctrine which before he had taught to slander and mockage? *Knox's history, Lib. i. pag. 101. 4to.*

I shall add nothing to his words, but only observe that according to this great reformer's judgment, there is but

poor shelter for occasional conformity in Paul's example.

Thus we have briefly look'd upon what the apostle supposes might befall himself, or others of God's dear children, **Gal. iv. 12.** and we see it was not unreasonable for him to put himself among others, so far as to say, if we sin wilfully, or willingly after that we have received the knowledge of the truth. It remains that now we should consider that, which notwithstanding all, he will still abide by. *There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.*

The truth and suitableness of the expression as it looks upon, the old testament dispensation, and the inclination of judaizing christians, and the perfection of Christ's sacrifice should fall under our observation.

(1.) It is very evident that the old testament dispensation was filled up **Heb. ix. 10.** with abundance of sacrifices. For, it stood in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation. Proper sacrifices there were appointed for most sins, and proper they were, because appointed, until the fulness of time. Upon the death of Christ they were to cease and remain no more. There **Dan. ix. 27.** were some sins indeed for which there **Lev. xxiv.** **16.** was no sacrifice appointed. Such as blas-

blaspheming the name of God, cursing ^{Exod. xxi.}
of parents, sinning presumptuously with ^{17.}
boldness and barefacedness, or with ^{Num. xv.}
an high hand, murder, adultery, and ^{30.}
such like; the persons guilty were to be ^{Num.}
cut off, by punishment and death. Up-
on this, *David* in his own case, crys
out, *Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would* ^{Lev. xx. 10.}
I give it. We must not think that all ^{Pt. li. 16.}
persons who in that day might be guilty
of some of the above-named crimes, for
which there was then no appointed ty-
pical sacrifice, were all damned under
the wrath of God. *David* himself, the
man after God's own heart had been then
in a miserable case. No, there remained
a sacrifice. Persons guilty of blasphemy,
presumption, murder, &c. have been
pardoned. Jesus Christ offered himself
up a sacrifice of a *sweet-smelling savour* ^{1 Tim. i. 13.}
to God, on the behalf even of such I
dont say that all such are saved by Christ;
but by him, all that believe are justified
from all things, from which they could ^{16.}
not be justified by the law of Moses. ^{Act. xiii.} ^{39.}
There was no sacrifice appointed for
them, under the law of *Moses*, but
the godly then believed that there was
a sacrifice that *remained*. But, now
there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.
Thus the expression answers to the old
testament times, wherein there were.
(1.) Sacrifices for a time to be *continued*.

(2.) Sins for which there were no typical sacrifices *instituted*. But the glorious sacrifice of Christ answers all, and it need not be repeated.

(2.) Upon the conversion of many of the *Jews* and proselytes unto christianity, there were mighty alterations made in the outward circumstances of divine worship. The gospel called for nothing but simplicity, spirituality and plainness, without outward pomp, and altogether without the vain inventions of men. Those of the *Jewish* nation, who were converted, were very much inclin'd to cloath *christianity* with the garments of *Judaism*. Yea, they thought it was necessary the *Jewish* ceremonies and sacrifices should be retained, because God had appointed 'em. Upon any fresh guilt contracted, they were bent in their minds to repeat their sacrifices *. And perhaps, the greater the sin, the greater the inclination to bring a sin-offering. This judaizing principle was

* Magno studio tenentur servandæ legis etiam de sacrificiis, de cibis vetitis, aliisque rebus eiusmodi. Nec id mirum: nam decretum quod fecerant apostoli tantum ex gentibus vocatos tangebat. Neque dum Paulus quicquam Judæos ea de ire docere cœperat; quod fecit aliquanto serius & quidem extra Judæam. Nam intra judæam qui erant Judæi χριστιανοί, hi, ante dispersionem illam quæ per Adrianum evenit, libertatem à legis onere non percepere, ut intelligimus ex Eusebio, & severo Sulpicio circa illa tempora. Et ad tales scripta est epistola ad Hebreos. Grotius apud Polium. Act. xxi. 20.

a great

a great *trial* to the churches, a great Gal. v. 12. trial to the apostles in those days. And, unto persons of *such principles*, the epistle wherein this text lies was written. Unto such persons does the apostle testify, that there remained no more sacrifice for sin.

(3.) The suitableness of the expression to set forth the perfection of Christ's sacrifice appears very evident. That put an *end* to all former sacrifices; and abides *perpetual* in its power and efficacy. To say that there remains a sacrifice for *some* sins, but not for *other* sins a sacrifice for people of understanding *before* they sin wilfully, but *afterwards* none, is in effect to *overturn* the christian religion, and with it the whole gospel. The devil has made great use of such a misinterpretation in order to cloud and eclipse the glorious sacrifice of Christ, and confound and perplex the minds of many of God's dear children. But let the expression have its own free course, and its own meaning shines, with a mighty clearness in it self, and unspeakable comfort to us. The work is *finished*, the law *fulfilled*, the justice of God *satisfied* for ever; there remains no more sacrifice to be repeated. Whatever sins a poor creature may be guilty of, it is his duty to look unto that already offered and accepted, Unto this very

very duty the text before us, calls poor sinners. They are called to go to Christ by faith; but they must not go to *Jerusalem* to sacrifice. For the sacrifice of Christ is compleat, and there remains no more.

Having thus consider'd the words of the text, and look'd upon the arguments therein against the repetition of sacrifices; it may not be improper just to take notice of another argument the apostle immediately adds unto the same purpose. Having told 'em that there remained no more sacrifice, he positively tells 'em, what it was that did remain to be look'd for at *Jerusalem* and the temple. *But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* Hereby is meant that sore and fiery judgment, which God would in a little time, bring upon the obstinate *Jews*, which, accordingly, about the seventieth year of Christ, probably about ten years after this epistle was writ, was by the *Romans* to all intents fulfilled. How *Jerusalem* was destroyed, the temple, sacrifices and sacrificers burnt together, how, many thousands were famished, many thousands slain, many thousands taken captive of the poor infatuated *Pt. xvi. 8. Jews*, is known to those who observe the

the works of the Lord, what judgments he executeth in the earth *.

If any poor converted Jew, out of respect to his nation, and to the temple, should think this hard ; the apostle answers him in ver. 28, 29, 30, 31. Where the sins of the obstinate, unconverted Jews are mentioned. Their sins were greater than any before-time under Moses, and their punishment must be sorer. They *trod under foot* the son of God. They counted *his blood* an unholy thing. That precious blood wherewith *he was sanctified*. Not the blood wherewith *they* were sanctified, for they were vile and prophane to the last degree ; but the blood wherewith Christ ^{Joh. xvii.} _{19.} *himself*† was sanctified ; that is dedicated unto God, as an eternal high priest, by the blood of the everlasting covenant which he offer'd unto God. *For their sakes I sanctifie myself.* This blood of the everlasting covenant they accounted

* *Judæi experti sunt hoc judicium & experiuntur. Quorum templum, urbs, & respublica, horrendum in modum, deleta sunt.* *Coccejus* in Loc.

No story so full of astonishing circumstances of misery as that of the Jews and their desolation, as may be seen, *Josephus de Bello Judaico*, Lib. 7.

† *Hoc autem rectissimè & aptissimè dicitur. Nam per passiones consummatus est, ut princeps & causa salutis.* *Heb.* ii. 10. v. 8, 9. *Atque ita a nostris peccatis absolutus est,* *Cap.* ix. 26. *Quomodo autem non, qui in spiritu, dum surrexit ex mortuis, justificatus est, etiam in sanguine suo sanctificatus est?* *Christus dicit, quod scipsum sanctificet pro discipulis.* *Coccejus* in Loc.

as prophane, and shed in just vengeance, and had done *despight* to the spirit of grace. If any shall think that this last expression denotes the *unpardonable blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost, I shall not contend. Not doubting but some if not all the blasphemers against the Holy Ghost in Christ's time, might be *alive* when the apostle writ this epistle; yea, and might live until the very destruction of the temple by the *Roman* soldiers.

But I rather understand it of that *wilful opposition* found among the *Jews* to that gracious spiritual gospel, preached by the apostles under the infallible conduct and influences of the *spirit of grace*. For it seems in order to follow their accounting the blood of Christ unholy. First they trod *under foot the son of God*, then they esteemed his *blood prophane*, and lastly they despightfully opposed the spirit of grace in the *ministry of the apostles*. For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in *Judea* are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffer'd like things of your

¹ Thess. ii. own country-men, even as they have
^{14, 15, 16.} of the *Jews*: who, both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the gentiles that they might

*might be saved, to fill up their sins al-*way: for the *wrath* is come upon them to the uttermost.

It is evident from the text as explain'd, that it is a possible thing that the sins of true believers may be attended with *aggravating circumstances*.

The more of the *will* is in any sin, by so much the *greater* that sin is.

The children of God are call'd upon to watch against, and mourn under a sense of the *corruptions* and *imperfections* of their wills.

The greater that *knowledge of the truth* is, any persons have received, and sin against, the *greater* is their sin.

It is not in the power of any *inherent qualifications* whether they seem to be lodged in the *will*, or in the *understanding*, to preserve persons from sinning.

Inbred *carnal principles*, strengthened by a *legal education* and a *formal profession*, will be ready even after faith received, to draw persons *aside* from the *simplicity* that is in Christ.

It is the duty of every child of God to *watch* against all inclinations of turning from the *communion* of saints, the *plainness* of gospel principles, the *sim-*
plicity

Observations.

plicity of gospel worship, and the *holiness* of a gospel walk.

Whenever a child of God sinneth, more or less, it is his duty indeed to *repent* and reform, but he must not think to make *atonement* for his sin, or make *amends* to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ by *once offering* up of himself has for ever *put an end* unto all atonements and sacrifices; his sacrifice being every way compleat, and of perpetual efficacy.

Whatever *aggravating circumstances* may attend the sins whereof any of the children of God may be guilty, it is not their duty to *despair* of life; but look immediately to the precious blood of Jesus Christ: the blood *that cleanseth from all sin*. Christ is always to be seen by faith, in the midst of the throne as a *lamb that had been slain*.



1 JOHN



I JOHN V. 16. *Explained.*

If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.



MONG the many privileges, wherewith the children of God are surrounded, access unto the throne of grace in prayer is to be regarded and valued by us in a peculiar manner. It is doubtless justly acknowledged that praying persons are of all others the greatest in the world. *What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things, that we call upon him for?* as prayer it self is a great duty and

Deut. iv. 7.

and an unspeakable privilege, so our encouragements to attempt the performance thereof are many. Christ is in heaven *making intercession for us*, the spirit of God is sent into the hearts of God's children *to help them to pray*, and the word of God is filled with great *and precious promises*, that we shall not pray *in vain*. This peculiar distinguishing favour the apostle mentions in the two foregoing verses: declaring that this is the *confidence* we have in God, that he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the *petitions that we desired of him*. If any child of God should hereupon observe that he has often sought the face of God in prayer for mercies, which he thought very necessary for God's glory and his good, but never could obtain 'em; the apostle has an

Eph. i. 11. answer ready; *if we ask any thing according to his will*. God's will is the rule of his own actions, and must determine the answers of our petitions. Upon this, a person that has been, and still is concerned in the duty of prayer, may take notice that God has in his word declared that it is his will that we should

Jam. v. 16. *pray one for another that we might be healed*; but notwithstanding, the afflicted person died, tho' God was instantly and fervently followed with prayers

prayers on his behalf. The apostle answers in the text, by distinguishing of sins and their consequences. If any man see his brother sin, a sin which is *not unto death*, he shall ask, and he shall give him *life* for them that sin *not unto death*. There is a sin *unto death*, I do not say that he shall pray for it, wherein the apostle would have us take notice. (1.) Of a sin not unto death. (2.) Of a sin unto death.

And here we have to consider, (1.) The person who is supposed may so sin *A brother*. (2.) What is supposed concerning another brother: he may see him sin in either respect. (3.) His duty thereupon with respect unto sin in the first branch; *he shall ask*. (4.) His encouragement so to pray: *he shall give him life*. (5.) His duty with respect unto sin in the second branch left undetermined; *I do not say he shall pray for it*.

It is not my design to insist upon the text in all the branches of it; only I would observe that christian love to, care of, and watchfulness over each other, while we are passing through the wilderness, are duties very beautiful, useful, and necessary. *Take heed, bre-* Heb. iii. 12 *thren, lest there be in any of you, an e-* 13 *vil heart of unbelief, in departing from*

the living God, but exhort one another daily, while it is call'd to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

It was a hateful spirit in Cain, the companion of a bloody principle, that made him say, *Am I my brother's keeper?* Gen. iv. 9. and we do generally find that person, who is backward to be his brother's keeper in an evangelical, forward enough to be his murderer, in a moral consideration. *But let brotherly love continue.* ^{1 Joh. iii. 15.} _{Heb. xiii. 1.}

By brother in the text, we are to understand a church member; a professed member of the mystical body of Christ.

If any that is called a brother do so, &c. for what have I to do to judge them also that are without? ^{1 Cor. v. 11. 12.}

By sin we are to understand the transgression of God's law, but more especially (as we shall see reason in the interpretation of the text to conclude) the breach of commands which relate to church worship.

Of those sins some were lesser, and some were greater, and accordingly persons for their neglect, and contempt of duty in God's worship, underwent a lesser or a greater rebuke and chastisement. God instructed his people in the beginning of the mosaical dispensation, Lev. x. 3. that he was jealous of his worship. In the

the beginning of the gospel dispensation
also, he has appeared to be a *consuming
fire*; therefore his people are to worship
him acceptably with reverence and god-
ly fear.

Act. v. 5.

Heb. xii. 28.
29.

I am perswaded the professors of the
day are not aware, what afflictions they
meet with in their own persons, in their
children, in their temporal affairs, &c. Hagg. i. 9.
for their not making conscience, as they
should of gospel worship, with all the
concerns thereof. As for their eternal
state (it is well they are saved by grace)
I am not at present discoursing of it, nor
does this text in John speak any thing
of that; but of God's dealings with his
people for their sins in a temporal way.
Some sins, in the wisdom of God, and
his providential government are sins unto
sickness and weakness, and some unto
temporal death. Christ Jesus, in the
wisdom of his providence, as he is head
over all things unto the church does
judge of the most proper consequences
of his peoples crimes, sometimes lighter,
sometimes heavier afflictions follow; and
sometimes temporal death may be judg-
ed necessary, for the glory of Christ,
and the common good of the mystical
body. But unto what degree soever
the affliction may grow, it is without
any mixture of the curse of the law, or
the wrath of God. Christ according to
below

the highest wisdom, grace and love, in the exercise of his mediatorial government judges and determines the whole affair.

What I do therefore affirm, and shall under God's assistance, out of his word, prove, is this, that by sin unto death in the text is meant a sin unto temporal death, and that only. That is a sin, a brother, a real believer may be supposed to commit; and this a death which a child of God may undergoe, and yet live for ever.

He suffers losf, but he himself is saved, yet so as by fire; for our God is a consuming fire.

For the confirmation of what I have asserted, I have several things to offer to consideration, which together however, will make a fair and full proof of the matter.

(1.) I do consider that that interpretation which unavoidably carries along with it, intolerable *absurdities*, should not by the children of God be received. There is nothing absurd, nothing contradictory in the whole word of God.

Prov. viii. 8. It is truth it self, altogether consistent with it self. God is one, his truth is so.

2Cor. i. 18. It is not yea and nay, but *yea and amen*. Whatever clashing, fighting notions, the children of men may entertain; the word

word of God does neither bear 'em, nor breed 'em, The gospel is one entire truth. The common interpretation does unavoidably carry along with it gross absurdities : for, we must observe, that according unto it, to say there is a sin not unto death, and a sin unto death is the same as to say, there is a sin for which people shall not be damned, and a sin for which they shall : a sin that does not end in eternal death, and a sin for which people must go to hell. How absurd in themselves, how contrary to all God's revealed will such expressions are, any person capable of comparing ^{1Cor.ii.13.} *spiritual things with spiritual* will presently determine. To say there is a sin not unto eternal death, and a sin unto eternal death, is directly to imagine and form an empty distinction, without real difference ; to make void the holy, just, and good law of God; to destroy the nature of sin, and to make the death of Christ of none effect.

That it distinguishes, where there is no difference, is plain for the end of all manner of sin, if persisted in, is eternal death. The apostle expressly affirms, that *the wages of sin* (that is, any sin whatsoever) *is death*. And, upon the supposition of sin, *dying thou shalt die*, was and remains to be the terrible, yet firm, and irrevocable language of the law.

law, under which sentence the non-elect shall find themselves always to have been. Whilst in this life, they are always *dead in sin*, and in all the steps they take, they approach towards eternal death; every sin unto them, is a sin unto that death. Now if the sin mentioned in the text, be a sin unto eternal death, wherein does it *differ* from the nature of sin in general? or, from any particular sin, those are guilty of who live and die unconverted? all their sins end alike. The unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost had something *peculiar* in it, in that it was unpardonable, all other sorts of blasphemies being pardonable, and have been pardoned to thousands: but to carry this sin, to be understood of sin unto eternal death, makes a distinction, *sive differentia*; a thing which the Holy Spirit must not be charged with.

That such an interpretation makes void the law is also very evident; because the law of God condemns all sin. The least sin any person may be guilty of, according to God's law, is a sin unto eternal death. And, that law which says otherwise is not the law of God.

Gal. iii. 10. The law curses every one that *continueth not in all things* written therein. He **Jam. ii. 10.** that offends in *one point*, *is guilty of all*. In the sight of God's law there are no sins

sins found that are not to eternal death.

That such an interpretation destroys the nature of sin is manifest, because sin has but one nature in all the degrees of it. Wherever it is found at all, it is exceeding sinful. It is enmity against God. It is of the same nature with eternal death. It is hell begun, let the degree of it be greater or lesser.

That it makes the death of Christ of none effect, appears with no less evidence than any of the former; for, according unto it, for the sins that are not unto eternal death, he need not have died; as for the rest, his death has not reach'd 'em, nor can his life relieve the persons who are guilty of them. It is impossible to number up all the absurdities that must unavoidably follow the common thoughtless turn upon this text.

(2.) I consider that that interpretation which gives unto ordinary persons, in an ordinary manner encouragement to censure, and judge of the eternal state of their brethren, is not to be received. *Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.* Rom. xv. 10.—13. G 4 God

God has not left it with poor mortals to judge each other's eternal state. Tho' there is a proud inclination in the children of men to usurp the judgment seat; yet the whole gospel rebukes it.

Joh. v. 22. All judgment is committed to the son.

We are bound to esteem each other better than our selves. It is the proper place of every believer to judge himself less than the least of all saints.

Phil. ii. 3. Crimes and offences we may indeed judge, and in a regular way proceed to church censures; but purely in obedience to rules written in God's word, in order to bring the guilty person to evangelical repentance:

Psal. l. 6. we must not meddle, for God is judge himself. To judge and censure others to eternal destruction, and leave off prayer for 'em as persons already condemned, must certainly appear unto impartial consideration, contrary unto the humility, meekness and love required under the gospel.

(3.) In order to manifest the glory of Christ's person, and to vindicate the holiness of his government before the whole world, and that persons might stand in awe and sin not; there was *extraordinary power* committed unto the apostles, and to several others in the primitive churches. That they were to receive

receive power from on high is very evident; our Lord bids 'em wait for it. It was given unto them by Christ, and the exercise of it constantly limited and directed by his spirit. The nature of it was extraordinary. The end of it was edification. It appeared various ways, in the exercise of various gifts, nor was every one partaker of all gifts in a like manner and measure. The sovereignty of Christ determined the whole, in the dispensation of his spirit. *For to one was given by the spirit the word of wisdom ; to another, the word of knowledge by the same spirit ; to another, faith by the same spirit ; to another, the gifts of healing by the same spirit ; to another, the working of miracles ; to another, discerning of spirits.* Our Lord Jesus, who, in the exercise of extraordinary power, made use of his servants for the healing of diseases, of which mercy, many poor miserable ones were made partakers, gave unto them power to inflict chastisements also, when he saw it necessary and convenient. I grant, that in the first, he was always more abundant, and in the other more sparing ; because he is slow to anger and of great kindness. To chastise is indeed his work, but it is his strange work. Nevertheless his servants had it in readiness to revenge all disobedience ; and Paul says he was entrusted

Luk.xxiv.

^{49.}

1 Cor. xii.

8, 9, 10.

Neh.ix.17.

Isa. xxviii.

^{21.}

2 Cor. x.6.

¹ Cor. iv.
^{21.} trusted with a *rod*, for that end. He
had *sharpness* to use, according to the
² Cor. xiii.
^{10.} power which the Lord had given him.
Some instances of the exercise thereof
may make the truth more evident.

When the Lord sent his gospel, and
own'd it for the conversion of *Sergius
Paulus*; *Elymas the Sorcerer* withheld
it, and endeavour'd to turn away that
deputy-governour from the faith. The
apostle *Paul*, upon this was filled with
the Holy Ghost, and set his eyes on him,
^{Aet. xiii. 10.} and said, O full of all subtlety, and all
^{11.} mischief, thou child of the devil, thou e-
nemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not
cease to pervert the right ways of the
Lord? and now behold the hand of the
Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be
blind not seeing the sun for a season:
and immediately there fell upon him a
mist and a darkness, and he went about,
seeking some to lead him by the hand.
It is true, *Elymas* was a profane wick-
ed man, and might not in a common
acceptation among christians, be called
a *brother*; but we find that the exercise
of this power reached others who were
called and esteemed *brethren*. The case
of *Ananias and Sapphira* is well known.
That they were members of the christi-
an church is very plain; that they were
tempted of satan, and prevailed upon to
^{Aet. v.} lie unto God, is very evident; but, that they
be flatus

they were poor, unconverted wretches
is what all the world cannot prove.

I see no foundation we have to question their eternal salvation. *Secret things* Deut. xxix.
belong to God. Peter never mentions 29.

their being unbelievers, nor does he tell them they should be damned. I see no reason we have to go any farther than what is written. That it is a possible thing for believers, under the prevailing power of temptation, to fall as they did, seems from scripture and experience very evident. That God might give them repentance unto life is beyond controversy; but, that their sin under its peculiar circumstances, was, by God's righteous sovereignty judged to be a sin unto temporal death is for special instruction recorded. *They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves thro' with many sorrows.* The eternal state of *Ananias* and *Sapphira* being left unto God; Peter under extraordinary teachings saw that their sin was a sin unto temporal death, and under the special power of the Holy Spirit denounced the inseparable consequence of their crime, which came to pass

¹Tim. vi. 9.
10.

pass immediately. *They fell down and gave up the ghost.*

The power of delivering any person or persons *unto satan* may properly here fall under our view *. *Paul* says that he had delivered *Hymeneus* and *Alexander* to satan that they might learn not to blaspheme ; and he advises *the Corinthians* to deliver the incestuous person to satan for the destruction of the flesh.

I do not question but it may be lawful for churches to use the expression, if they please, upon the casting out of any person or persons from their communion. I do not see that the Holy Ghost ties us up to any form of words in that awful ordinance. Casting out of the church, putting away from among our selves ; looking upon them as heathen men and publicans, are used in scripture to express excommunication by : and delivering to satan may be very safely used according to the interpretation Dr. *Owen* and Mr. *Chauncy* give of it. This delivery unto satan is no more but the casting

* *Ἄγριων κρατῆς κεντρόντης* in his verbis conceditur iis (*apostolis*) (1.) Potestas ferendi rebelles, *morte* aut *plagā* aliqua corporali. (2.) Potestas tradendi satanæ. Dum inter potestates jam collatas, numeramus potestatem tradendi satanæ, longissimè absumus ab ista sententia quæ traditio satanæ nihil aliud facit quam excommunicare. *Lightfoot* in *Johan. xx. 23.*

of a man, out of the visible kingdom of Christ, so giving him up as to his outward condition into the state of heathens and publicans, which belonged unto the kingdom of satan. Dr. Owen's gospel church, pag. 205. To deliver up such an one to satan is no more than the putting him out of communion of the church, the kingdom of heaven, into the world, the kingdom of satan. Chauncy's instit. pag. 126. But though the expression thus understood, may be very agreeably and usefully taken up in casting out of church communion obstinate offenders; a brief inquiry into the meaning of it *originally* may not here be unseasonable nor impertinent.

That the apostle *Paul* did not mean ordinary excommunication by it seems very probable.

(1.) From the consideration of the expression it self, which seems to be of a nature and sound quite *different* from any expression used among the Jews, to signify excommunication; as the learned observe *. That it is of a different nature from any deliver'd by Christ un-

* Excommunicatio ecclesiastica, quantum deprehendere viri doctissimi potuerunt, nunquam ea similiive phrasi apud Hebraeos, quorum idioma sequuntur apostoli, designata fuit. Witsius, de vita Pauli, pag. 131. Lightf. Hor. Heb. in 1 Cor. v. 5. fusc.

to the disciples; or by the disciples in the early days of christianity unto the churches, to signifie excommunication is very manifest unto any reader of ordinary capacity. To be *cast out*; to be *taken away from among* the faithful; to *put away from among* themselves; to esteem such as a *heathen man and publican*; and such like, were expressions well known, and whereby excommunication in its true nature might presently be understood; but the phrase of delivering one to satan seems to intend something of another nature.

2. Paul upon the affair of the incestuous *Corinthian*, I Cor. v. plainly distinguishes between excommunicating him, and delivering him to satan. With respect to excommunication he plainly charges the *Corinthians* with sin, in that they had not *mourned*, that he who did that foul deed might be took away from among them, but he never charges 'em with sin in that they had not deliver'd him to satan. To put him away from among themselves by excommunication, he knew they could no less than judge to be their duty, tho' they neglected it; but to deliver to satan, he owns in a very solemn manner to be his own certain special judgment which he was carried out into; *I verily have judged already.* Any church

church might censure an obstinate offender, with the censure of excommunication without the apostles presence with them; but in order to deliver any one to satan, he intimates that he should be present; but in this extraordinary case, it was by the sovereignty of God order'd, so, that it should be *as tho'* the apostle were *present*. And in the whole chapter there seems to be a careful distinction in the phrase and expression. Excommunication is in the second verse expressed, by the mans being taken away from among 'em, and in the 13th verse, by putting away from among themselves that wicked person; but his being deliver'd to satan is a thing by it self of another consideration.

3. To deliver to satan does not seem in scripture to be the special work of any church, but a peculiar power, awful in its exercise, committed unto *Paul*, as unto the *other apostles*, in an extraordinary way. Therefore he does not say that *Hymeneus* and *Alexander* were deliver'd to satan by any church they belonged to; but by the apostle himself. *Whom I have deliver'd to sa-* 1 Tim. i. 20.
tan. And as to the *Corinthians* the case was so extraordinary that the man was to be deliver'd to satan. (1.) As *tho'* the apostle *was present*. (2.) In the exercise of his apostolical power; which

which he calls *his spirit*. (3.) In the power, that is the *miracle working power* of our Lord Jesus Christ. But unto ordinary excommunication none of all these things were required.

That by delivering to satan, was understood an awful giving up, in the exercise of an extraordinary apostolical power, an offending person to satan to be afflicted with pains and torments of body, and perhaps of mind seems very probable.

Job ii. 7.

Luk. xiii. 16.

Rom. viii. 13.

That satan may have a hand in bodily afflictions is plain. The scripture tells us that satan did smite Job with *sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown*: and the Holy Ghost informs us of a certain daughter of Abraham, who had been bound by satan eighteen years. Unto this consideration we may add the reasons wherefore the persons mentioned, were deliver'd to satan; the one for the destruction of his flesh, that his soul might be saved; the other two, that they might learn *not to blaspheme*. That God has made use of satan to chastise and afflict the bodies or minds of persons is very evident from scripture, but that he has made use of him to subdue any sin is what can never be proved. The *body* may be mortified by satan, but the *deeds* of the body must

must be mortified by the spirit of God. The incestuous Corinthian abounded in unnatural lust. He is deliver'd to satan for the destruction of his flesh. His body with pains and torments shall be brought down. And we find he was in danger of being swallowed up with over-much sorrow. When the devil had him in hand, he shew'd him no mercy. Therefore says the apostle in his second epistle, go confirm your love to him ; for, we are not ignorant of satan's devices. God made use of satan to afflict; God, under the affliction in his own way and time sealed instruction ; and taught the one to walk in chastity and holiness before him, and the other to speak honourably of him.

And lastly, when we view the special power exercised in this awful dispensation ; it seems to evidence it self to be purely apostolical, and to intend that rod the apostle says he was entrusted withal, to be used sometimes with sharpness ; but always under the special direction of the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary way.

How a great many of the learned in later ages have declared themselves to be of this mind is known unto those who are conversant with their writings. As to the ancient fathers, great Bochart

H tells

tells us, that all he had seen were of that judgment *.

(4.) I would observe, that tho' the Lord in sovereign wisdom sometimes made use of the ministry of his servants, in the exercise of this extraordinary power, to inflict punishments or chastisements, yet he never tied or limited himself thereunto. In all his government free unlimited sovereignty has swayed the scepter. When he pleases, he makes use of means; and acts immediately according to his pleasure. But in an ordinary way from the first until
 Ps. xcix. 8. now he has thought good, *To forgive his peoples sins, and to take vengeance on their inventions.* Of many sinful inventions they are guilty; and from them all he will vindicate himself, and in his own way eminently deliver them. Of lighter afflictions, which, for God's glory, and his people's special advantage, in the course of providential government generally follow particular crimes I shall not now take notice. The text before us leads us to consider how some sins should be followed with temporal death. *There is a sin unto death.* The two

* Veteres omnes, quotquot mihi videre contigit, locum hinc sic interpretantur.

sons of *Aaron* found it an early truth. They both died before the Lord in a very awful manner. I dare not say but they were both godly persons; but their sin proved to be a sin unto death. So jealous was God of the purity and plainness of his worship; and so averse unto humane innovations. I dare by no means conclude that all the murmuring *Israelites* were ungodly wretches; yet God sware they should not enter into his rest; their carcases fell in the wilderness.

Moses, the man of God spake unadvisedly with his lips, on the account whereof; tho' he earnestly prayed he might go into the promised land, yet, he must die the other side of *Jordan*, and God bid him forbear praying it should be otherwise. Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter. His sin proved a sin unto death. If the children of God stubbornly turn aside, their transgression shall be visited with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. This is one eminent part of God's revealed will concerning the saints; and under the new testament we find it fulfilled. Those whom God loves he chastens and rebukes if need be.

In the church of *Corinth* there were many notorious disorders; and in many instances God met with them accordingly. That which concerned the Lord's

supper may suitably fall under our notice. When they came to the Lord's table some of them were drunk; some in an unworthy, careless manner without examining themselves, their design, or end, did partake thereof as of common bread and wine; so did eat and drink to their own damnation; or, to their loss or *disadvantage*, as it is to be understood. *For this cause, many were weak and sickly among them, and many were fallen asleep.*

<sup>1 Cor. xi.
30.</sup>

All of them did not sin unto death, but many of them did.

^{1 Cor. xv. 6.}

There were many *asleep*, that is, there were many of them *dead*, and many of them had sinned themselves unto sick-

<sup>1 Thess. iv.
15.</sup>

ness and weakness. In this very instance the text under consideration is fully explained, and the truth it self fully asserted that God measures out variety of chastisements for sin, whether to sickness or death, as the matter requires, even among his own dear children.

I need not caution believers, I hope, against entertaining notions upon this head, that take from the glory and honour of that *plenary* satisfaction offer'd by Christ in his active and passive obedience to divine justice for the sins of all

^{a Pet. i. 17.} the elect. God testifies that he is well

^{b Ps. xxvii. 4.} *pleas'd*, and that *fury* is not in him.

As we have already observed, all the afflictions

afflictions of the godly of what name or nature soever they may be, are order'd by Christ in wise love and grace, in the management of his *providential* government, that sin may be subdued, the mouth of iniquity stopped, the holiness of Christ's government vindicated, the hearts of God's children under evangelical instruction humbled, their expectations of deliverance from sin and sorrow raised, and in the whole, the eternal *Jehovah* glorified.

(5.) Then in the last place when I consider the words of the text, they lead me by the hand directly to believe, that by sin unto death is meant a sin unto temporal death. Every believer hath the son; every brother is supposed to be a *believer*; he that hath the son of God, hath him for ever; the gifts of God are without repentance, and who-ever hath the son, hath *everlasting life* ^{1 Joh.v.12.} in him. He is already *passed from death* ^{1 Joh.v.24.} unto life: but the life in the text is of another nature, it is given unto one brother, upon another praying brothers request. Any person will readily think, that thereby is meant a sparing of him that sinned from temporal death, a recovering of him from sickness and affliction; much like that, *Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.* Now seeing that by life in the

text is meant temporal life, it necessarily follows, that by death is meant temporal death. In the 5th chap. of *James*, the matter is set in very clear light. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oyl in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that you may be healed. The inwrought prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* The apostle *James* does treat at large of sin unto sickness, and encourages the brethren to pray for one another that they might be healed: the apostle *John* writing a great while after, gives the true reason why they were not always answer'd, in all their prayers for each others healing, because there were some sins *unto death*. Then again, of the sin that is unto death, the apostle *faith, I do not say that he shall pray for it.* That is, when he sees it is the will of God, to afflict a brother even unto death for some sin he has committed; it is not his business to oppose the will of God in the matter. But this does not in the least intimate that he should not pray for his *person*, and for his *comfort* until death, and in death; yea, it plainly

Jam. v. 14,
15, 16.

plainly implies that he should ; because the Holy Ghost does not make the exception upon his person, but his sin. I do not say he shall pray for it. That is for the removal of that affliction which it hath brought, and which now evidently *appears* will end in death. God in wisdom judging and having determined, that the *death* even of a child of his, after the commission of such a sin, would be more useful to his glory, and honour before all ; and more for the edification of the church, than the *continuance* of his life, submission becomes the creature.

Thus the interpretation runs smooth and fair, agreeable to the whole analogy of faith.

But then it may be asked, if this death is only a temporal death ; which affliction a child of God may sin himself into, then what is the meaning of the apostle in ver. 18 ? *We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

I answer, by sin, and that wicked one in this text, can never be understood the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, nor any sin that must end unavoidably in eternal death, nor

H 4 yet,

yet, that sin unto temporal death. For in the words immediately following, the apostle affirms that all the world lies *in that wicked one*. Tho' we say in wickedness; yet in the Greek it is the very same expression, and doubtless must mean the very same thing, with the former. All the world lieth *in that wicked one*.

Now, it was never said by any that all the unconverted in the world; or, that all the non-elect in the world, are guilty of that unpardonable blasphemy. Whatever wickedness this is; it is what every one that is not born of God, let him be elect or non-elect, lieth in.

The apostle having in the 16th verse taken notice of the sins of believers, as being attended with lesser and greater chastisements in this world, according to their nature and degree, and, tho' he there supposes, that some of them might be guilty of sin, even unto temporal death, yet in ver. 18, 19. he shews us in what respect they *do not sin at all*. In all those who are born of God, even at their worst, tho' they may sin distantly, and meet with dismal calamities accordingly, there is something that takes part with God. Consider a converted man, and however it may be with him, yet *all of him* does not lie in that wicked one. Tho' all the world does.

Joh. iii. 6.

does, and all of every unconverted one. Rom. vii.
For whatever is born of the flesh, is
flesh, and therein dwells no good thing.
When converting grace comes, it puts
some *good thing towards the Lord God*
of Israel, into the soul, which good
thing shall never be lost, tho' clouded.
Whosoever is born of God sinneth not;
the seed which God hath sown in his
heart, *remaineth in him;* and he *cannot* ^{1 Joh. iii. 9.}
sin, because he is born of God. He keep-
eth himself pure, and that *wicked one*
toucheth him not, that is, the regene-
rate part, from which sometimes the
man is denominated, does not, cannot
yield to sin; and consequently does not
commit sin; tho' sin, when committed
is the person's sin, the believer's sin.
The whole we have in *Paul's ex-*
perience. For the good that I would, Rom. vii,
I do not: but the evil which I would ^{19, 20.}
not, that I do. Now if I do that I would
not, it is no more I that do it, but sin
that dwelleth in me. Consider the law
in his members, consider the law of
his mind; consider his flesh, and con-
sider his inward man, and you will see
how *Paul sinned, and how he sinned*
not at all.

How one brother might make a
judgement of the sin of another, so
as to know whether it was unto sick-
ness

ness only, or unto temporal death, may briefly be consider'd.

By that time, *John* wrote this epistle, the churches had stood many years, so that their own *observation* might be of great use to them. They had heard, they had seen, how God had dealt with persons, who had sinned after such a manner, and might from thence infer what he would do in like cases.

At the *knowledge* of those sins they might come by their own *observation*, or by the sinning brother's confession.

The deficiency of ordinary gifts and attainments was oftentimes abundantly made up, in the primitive churches, by extraordinary assistances; whereof we are now incompetent judges. That gift of discerning of spirits, doubtless might have its particular usefulness in this case.

From this text, thus explained under divine assistance, we are called to adore the holiness, wisdom and love of God in Habb. i. 13. and through Christ. His *holiness*, in that he cannot bear with sin in his own children. He is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity. *He is glorious in holiness*. Then, his *wisdom*, in ordering chastisements as is best for his glory, and the benefit of the mystical body of Christ.

Exod. xv.
11.

He

He is the *only wise God our Saviour.* In infinite wisdom he weighs and measures every affliction. In measure, when it shooteth forth, he will *debate* with it, he *stayeth his rough wind, in the day of Isa. xxvii. 8.* his *east wind.* When it is necessary, the chastisement should be only to sickness, or to afflictions in relations, or possessions, it falls out accordingly ; but when it is necessary it should be even to temporal death, God's thoughts are entirely answered. He never acted unfairly, nor imprudently towards any of his children, in their lighter, nor in their heavier afflictions. In every thing he *abounds towards us in all wisdom and Eph. i. 8: prudence.* Then again, we are called upon to admire his *love* to us in that he does not suffer us to lie in that wicked one ; all the world lieth there.

The great shepherd takes care of his flock in love ; measures out chastisements to them according to wise love. He afflicts us *for our profit.* When we ^{Rev. iii. 19.} are judged, we are chastened of the ^{Heb. xii. 10.} Lord, *That we should not be condemned* ^{1 Cor. xi. 32.} *with the world.*

Again, from this doctrine we are instructed to avoid sin, as on many other great and glorious accounts ; so on this, that our days may be *comfortable* in this world. Among other plain precepts that in *Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3.* is but little

little understood. *Children obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right, honour thy father and mother* (which is the first commandment with promise) *that it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth.* This is a new testament precept, and so is that in **I Pet. iii. 10.** *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, &c. Let him eschew evil, and do good.* Let all neglect and contempt of God's worship be avoided. Yea, disorder, heartlessness, and carelessness in God's worship, will be found dangerous. *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved; let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;* for our God is a *consuming fire.* Let not the sons of Aaron be forgot. Nor what befel the disorderly *Corinthians.* This is that the Lord spake, saying, *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.*

Lev. x. 3. Moreover, from hence we are called, when under affliction, to *consider the reason* of the controversy. Affliction cometh *not forth of the dust.* God does not *afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* Is there not a cause? the rod seems to be in vain, if the voice thereof is not heard. But the *man of wisdom,*

**Heb. xii.
28, 29.**

Job v. 6.

**Lam. iii.
33.**

Micah vi. 9.

wisdom will hear it. If the rod is but duly observed, it will be seen to point at the very crime : either as to immorality in the world, or to a neglect of, or a *Laodicean* spirit in God's worship. I will not say that outward afflictions are always for sin. God sometimes has other wise and gracious ends in the saints trials. But still let the children of God enquire of him who can tell them the reason. *I will say unto God my rock,* Ps. xliii. 9. *why hast thou forgotten me ? why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy ?* I will not say that outward afflictions are the *only* chastisements God may suffer his children to lie or languish under. *Soul* diseases are far the greatest. Spiritual barrenness, driness, deadnes and leanness are unspeakable afflictions indeed. Let the poor lifeless, jocular, tipling, company-keeping, worldly professors of the day consider what diseases they languish under. Let them consider the reason, let them begin at the bottom, and deal faithfully all the way with God and their own souls. Let them descend to particulars, and not rest in general acknowledgments.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more ; that which I see not, teach thou me ; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more. The duty of every living man. Job xxxiv. 31. 32. Lam. iii. 39, 40. In

In the next place, seeing we have not that extraordinary gift of discerning of spirits ; together with the particular nature of some sins, and the chastisements which must follow (though our observation as men and christians is not without its use) let us, with submission to divine, sovereign wisdom, *pray for all* our afflicted brethren. There is not a word in the text we have been opening, against it. Yea, there is a great deal for it. The Holy Ghost Eph. vi. 18. carefully distinguishes between the person and the sin, in the words, for our instruction. Let it never be said among any of God's people, such an one has sinned the unpardonable sin, I cannot *in conscience* pray for him. It is 1 Tim. ii. 1. our plain duty to make *prayers and supplications for all men.*

Lastly, If God does visit the iniquities of his children with stripes, and that sometimes to temporal death ; then let those who lie in that wicked one, who live in sin, and consequently are dead whilst alive, *consider* where matters will Prov. xi. 31. end with them. *Behold the righteous* 1 Pet. iv. 17. *shall be recompensed in the earth : much more the wicked, and the sinner ; and, if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel ?*



The unpardonable Blasphemy consider'd.

MATTH. XII. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

IN the words we have, 1. A general, indefinite assertion of grace ; *all manner of sins shall be forgiven.* 2. A particular exception of divine sovereignty. *But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.* 3. Both

3. Both these more particularly expressed in *Verse 32.*

What our Lord here intends, we shall endeavour under divine assistance to explain ; but some previous observations must fall under our notice in order to bring us to our designed work.

It is certain that the doctrine of the gospel, is a doctrine of eminent grace and mercy. It is fill'd up with the good news of absolute *reigning* grace. God is said to bear a testimony to it, and the children of God are said to be under the *dominion* of it, as it is a word of grace. God as publishing it, proclaims himself to be the God of all grace, Christ as the sum of it is said to be full of grace, the Holy Spirit in bringing it home to the conscience, is said to be the *spirit of grace*. Whenever any person partakes of any good or distinguishing gift, the gospel leads him to say *by grace I am what I am*, nothing can be more evident than that we are saved by grace ; and when, and where the sins of the saved do abound, grace in saving doth much more abound. The covenant declared and published in and by the gospel is deservedly called the covenant of grace, being a covenant wherein tender mercies are revealed, even the *sure mercies of David*. Grace every way full even to the vilest of men,

^{14.}
Rom. vi. 14.
Act. xiv. 3.
^{10.}
Joh. i. 14.
Zech. xii. 10.
1 Cor. xv. 10.
Eph. ii. 8.
Rom. v. 20.
Isa. lv. 3.

Psal. li. 12.

men, and a multitude of tender mercies even to the unworthiest; but still according to the pleasure of absolute divine sovereignty, *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy.*

Exod.
xxxiii. 19.

It is as evident that this wonderful grace as proclaimed in the gospel, supposes the sinful, miserable condition of the children of men; so that it is impossible to preach mercy, without pointing at the misery. *The whole need not the physician.* Forgiveness published, leads us to consider guilt contracted. Every word of grace carries us to look upon some wound of sin. In hearing of spiritual life prepared for us in Christ, we are instructed to look on our selves as spiritually dead in our selves. When we understand that all fulness dwells in him, it is reasonable to infer that we are by nature empty of that which is good, and consequently filled with evil. The gospel makes it exceeding manifest, that the condition of man by nature is unspeakably miserable. *Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self. Wo is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.*

Col. i. 19.
Rom. viii.
18.Hos. xiii. 9.
Isa. vi. 5.

Upon views of exceeding misery, weakness and unworthiness; discouragements will naturally and inevitably follow;

Ifa. lvii. 14. follow; therefore it is the manifest design of the gospel to take *stumbling-blocks* out of the way of poor sinners, *Ifa. lxii. 10.* that they may flee with more freedom and readiness to Jesus Christ their rock and refuge. The way must be cast up, and prepared before them, and the stumbling-block must be removed, or the express commands of the compassionate redeemer cannot be answered.

The experience of all ages of christianity has made it very evident, that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; under misconstruction and misapplication, has been an awful stumbling-block unto many, whereby they have been to the great disadvantage of religion, kept back from that usefulness in faith, comfort and holiness required of them. To remove the stumbling-block, if possible, is certainly our duty; and many weighty considerations there are which will justify such an attempt.

In order therefore to cast up the way, it concerns us rightly to understand the nature of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What belonged unto it in *common* with other sins, as being contrary to God's nature, and a transgression of his law is not that which in a special manner lies upon

on our hands to search into; but, what are those circumstances of aggravation which belong unto it, as it is the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? I humbly apprehend, that it has been no small injury to the christian world to make more sins than one unpardonable, or to intimate that sins under several and different circumstances, may yet be esteemed unpardonable. Our Lord plainly affirms, that all manner of sins and blasphemies, but that one, shall be forgiven. That *sin*, that *sin only*, that sin sinned in such a *manner* only is unpardonable. An impartial search therefore after the true nature of that blasphemy, so that it may with some light and evidence be discover'd and discern'd, as *different* from all other sins and blasphemies, may under the blessing of heaven, be attended with some usefulness among the children of God.

But in our search, if we call, who among the children of men will answer? *and to which of the saints shall we turn?* Job v. 1. certainly we must here lay aside all human conjectures, for in no instance are they more at a loss to relieve us. *Pareus* treating of the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost, tells us, that he did not think it worth his while to mention the multitude of

different apprehensions the antient fathers had about it *. As for the *Papists* they have many sins, which they make to be the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit ; but, they are never the more unpardonable for being made so by the children of men ; for, *God is judge himself.* As for the reformed, both at home and beyond the seas, such as have fallen into my hands ; many are pleas'd to entertain the common thought of its consisting in a malicious opposition to known truth ; others expres different apprehensions ; and some leave the matter altogether undecided.

I am perswaded none of them should think themselves treated in an unbecoming manner, if we do with humility lay them aside, while we search into that account of the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which we have in the scripture. If we cannot understand the true nature of it from thence, we shall always sit down in darkness ; for of the conjectures of men there is no end. That sin which we find there unpardonable, is the only un-

Psal. viii. 20.
Psal. cxix. 205.
Prov. vi. 23.

* De peccato in Sp. S. quale sit, *innumeras* veterum sententias non referam. Alii finalem impenitentiam dixerunt, alii inadvertiam fraternalm, alii desperationem indulgentiam dei.

pardonable one, let the children of men imagine and express what they please. To the *more sure* word of prophecy, we must have a recourse, the *entrance* of which will give us light.

^{2 Pet. i. 15.}^{Psal. cxix.}^{130.}

In order then to understand the words proposed to be explained, it is absolutely necessary to consider what leads thereunto. Looking back so far as *ver. 22.* we find there a person possessed with a devil, blind and dumb, brought unto Christ, in order to be healed. It seems very evident, that the poor man's infirmities were *preternatural*, and immediately followed upon his being possessed. It is possible there may be many thousands in the world, who may be blind or dumb, or both in a natural way, yet far from being possessed with a devil. Their Affliction is great, yet their condition may be happy, if God pleases but to bring them by faith near to himself. The person here hinted was blinded and tongue-ty'd by the devil. How long he had been in that dreadful condition does not appear. However, now under the conduct of gracious providence he is brought to one that could heal him. *And he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.*

^{Matt. viii. 1.}

Many are the instances of divine power put forth by Christ in healing dis-

I 3 eases,

eases, and casting out devils. That age seem'd to be mighty singular in the *necessity* and *reality* of its miracles. Never sure were miracles wanted more among the children of men, and never were the children of men indulg'd more with their enjoyment than at that time. There was a special appearance of divine wisdom in such a dispensation; our Lord must show his divine power, and he must have opportunity. He had it, he made use of it, and proved himself indeed to be *the Lord that healeth us.*

*Exod. xv.
26.*

In ver. 23. we have some account of that *effect* which the miracle had upon the common people, *and all the people were amazed, and said, is not this the son of David?* the miraculous work of our Lord produced in them such an amazement of mind, as issued in a general assent to the great truth of the gospel. It is not said indeed that they were filled with *faith*, tho' they were filled with *astonishment*. It is a very awful truth, that poor sinners left unto themselves may *behold, wonder and perish*. But so the case stands with the fallen sons and daughters of *Adam*; outward miracles may fill them with amazement, but the power of Christ working miraculously within them, must give them *faith*.

Acts xiii.

40.

Eph. i. 19.

All

All that do really believe, will acknowledge that they do so, according to the working of the exceeding greatness of his power. Nevertheless outward miracles were not without their special usefulness. The doctrine of truth was thereby eminently confirmed, the souls A&T. xiv. 3. of the saints in faith abundantly established ; and oftentimes Jesus Christ in a general way confessed and acknowledged to be the Messiah, even by thousands who did not believe in him for everlasting life. So the persons under our present notice cry out, *Is not this the son of David?* they expected the Messiah to come, they expected him to be the son of *David* ; and in a manner fully acknowledged Jesus Christ to be the very person.

They expected the Messiah *to come*, and by that time their expectations were raised very high. For, so far as they understood the scriptures, they could no less than acknowledge that the time of the promise was now expiring, or actually expired. If the *scepter* was departing or departed from *Judah*, and the *law-giver* from between Gen. xlix. 10. his feet, it was high time for them to expect the Messiah according to promise. That it was very low with them as to civil polity and all government, is very plain ; for, they were tributary

to *Cæsar*, they acknowledged they had no king but him, and that it was *unlawful* for them to put any man to death.

Joh. xix. 15. *Joh. xviii. 31.*

As the *Jews* were then in great expectation of the Messiah's sudden appearance, so according to the highest reason and revelation, they expected him to be *the son of David*. They were not so insolent as to affirm, nor so vain as to imagine that he had a human body from eternity, or that God, before the creation of the world, had created and preserv'd by him some sort of matter, that was in time to drop down into some body's womb, and there become flesh and bones for Christ. Such abominations they were strangers to. As they knew that God did not speak with a design to deceive them,

Gen. iii. 15. when he said that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpents head*; and when he said to *Abraham*, *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, so they were very well perswaded that the God of truth did not, could not lye unto *David*. The Lord hath *sworn in truth unto David*, *he will not turn from it, of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne*. Tho' Jesus Christ was *David's Lord*, yet he was *David's son*. He was a rod that came forth out of the stem of *Jesse*, and

Pf. xxxii. 11.

Gal. iii. 16.

Isa. xi. 1.

and a branch that grew out of his roots. This the *Jews* knew must be very true. They knew the *horn of salvation* must be raised up in *David's house*. *He who is Jehovah our righteousness*, is also a righteous branch raised unto *David*. *He who is declared to be the son of God with power*, yet was made of the seed of *David according to the flesh*. This article the apostle *Peter* with great freedom insisted upon, in his first sermon after Christ's ascension, in the hearing of which thousands were converted. *Men and brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day: therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne.* Believing the word of the Lord, then we rest fully satisfy'd that *Jesus Christ's human body was made of a woman, that is, of the virgin his mother*; he was made of the seed of *David* according to the flesh. Whether they are christians or no, who think and speak otherwise, is not my business to determine; but I dare affirm that the *Jews* had a better confession of Faith. *Is not this the son of David?*

Whereby

Whereby they do in a manner acknowledge Jesus to be the *Messiah*. Sometimes by such interrogations persons vehemently affirm. Whether we must look upon this as a vehement affirmation, or as a speech attended with doubtfulness and hesitation, we need not curiously enquire. It seems by their confession, that they were *almost* like him, who was *almost* persuaded to be a christian. However the *Pharisees* thought that what Christ did, and what they said, offer'd them sufficient provocation to express themselves in that dreadful language, which we have in the following verse. *But when the Pharisees heard it, they said this fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.* That is, when they had heard that confession of the people, they were present, and saw the miracle themselves, for our Lord immediately answers them to what they had said, but when they had heard that confession, and saw that the people were inclin'd to entertain good and honourable thoughts of Christ, and his work, they broke out into this *prodigious* blasphemy.

Prov. xxvii. 4. Selfishnes, prejudice, envy and wrath will cast reproach upon the best of persons, and make the worst of the best of actions. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is*

is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy !

Ort@, This fellow ; a term of the greatest contempt. *He was despised* Is. liii. 3. *and rejected of men.* But this was not all. They were suffer'd to go a great way further. And in them we may see what devils incarnate men are when left unto themselves.

This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by *Beelzebub* the prince of the devils. In this very speech of theirs, the *un pardonable blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost did lye. Our Lord indeed testified, and evident it was unto the children of men, that he cast out devils Mat.xii.28. *by the spirit of God.* They could not help themselves, but they must be under some secret impressions of this truth. Their thoughts which 'tis said *Jesus* knew, must make some concessions to invincible demonstrations of divine and eternal power. When their madness gave them leave to think at all, they could no less than think that such an action carried along with it a plain testimony to the *verity* of the doctrine preached, and the *omnipotence* of the person working. Therefore it is granted, that those who did blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, did so in the face of, and contrary unto strong convictions in their own breasts, grounded upon unquestionable

questionable evidences. So we find, that though the Pharisees did see the miracles, and must as *rational* creatures conclude they were wrought by the spirit of God ; yet that very spirit they call *Beelzebub* the prince of the devils. It does not much concern us strictly to understand the special import of every particular word in this blasphemy. *Beelzelul* signifies *the God of flies* ; but the word here as every where else in the new testament is *Beelzebub*, a dunghill God. Why the translators did not give us the right name I understand not. The devils are look'd upon to be the worst of creatures, and the prince of the devils, if degrees of comparison may there be admitted, must be look'd upon as the worst of devils ; so that the expression taken together must be look'd upon as the very worst their wicked wit could invent. But, they thought it good enough, and doubtless wish'd they could have invented a worse for the spirit of God. They said, and they would have had the people believe that the spirit whereby our Lord did work miracles was the worst of devils.

Our Lord according to that meekness of wisdom wherewith he was filled, demonstrates in the following verses, the irrationality and impossibility of what they asserted, and then makes mention

of

of the unpardonableness of their crime ; which presently shall further fall under our notice.

In the mean time we must observe, that according unto the whole account we have of the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost in scripture, it must be thus defined. It was, *A wrathful breaking out in the most reviling words the children of men could invent against the Holy Ghost evidently appearing unto their reason and senses, in the miracles wrought by Christ himself before their eyes.*

This Definition we shall briefly look upon in its several parts, and take notice more distinctly how it answers all the account we have of the matter in sacred history.

1. We say it was a breaking out in the most reviling *words*. Therefore in the three evangelists it is never call'd the sin against the Holy Ghost, but the *blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost. Blasphemy strictly speaking must signify hurtful defamatory *words* spoken. We have seen what words they were, the *Pharisees* uttered against the eternal spirit. And the evangelist *Mark* giving us some account of our Lord's awful sentence upon them, says it was, *Because they said he hath an unclean spirit.* Their thoughts doubtless were bad enough,

Mark iii.
30.

enough, but as bad as they were, they could not from thence be denominated blasphemers against the Holy Ghost; but, because they *said* he hath an unclean spirit. Their words were stout against him. To say that this unpardonable crime might be committed in thoughts only, or in works only, or in both together, without the most reviling words is to contradict the account we have of the matter in scripture. It must still be observ'd, that they were not words sinful or blasphemous in a lower degree than were spoken, but the most wicked and hellish that could be found out. *He doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.* Thus their profane mouths were opened against the Holy Spirit of God. All that may be call'd sinful, could not invent a viler expression.

2. We say it was a *wrathful* breaking out in the most reviling words. This the whole current of the story makes evident. Their wrath was cruel, their anger was outragious. Every word they spake manifested a world of wrath. Is the carnal mind *enmity* against God? Here the fire of hell work'd it up to the highest degree of rage and fury. The *Jews* were always ready to rise up in anger against the person, doctrine, and works of Jesus Christ. So that at another

Rom. viii.
7.

ther season 'tis said, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. In this a great deal of the nature of hell may be seen. I can't here but observe, that seeing all are children of wrath by nature, what reason those who are reconciled to God have to admire distinguishing grace towards themselves, and praise the Lord for that restraint that is put upon others ?

Luk.iv.28.

3. We say that their words were *against the Holy Spirit of God*. That their words were also against Jesus Christ is very manifest. In their words and conduct they did treat him with the greatest contempt ; but our Lord says that all sins and blasphemies against him were pardonable. Therefore our present concern is not with what they spoke against him, but what they spoke against the Holy Spirit. It was their blasphemy against the *spirit* that was unpardonable. It was the Holy Spirit they called unclean. It was the eternal *Jehovah* in the person of the spirit, which they called *Beelzebub* a dunghill heathenish God. It was the good spirit of God, which they called a devil, yea, the prince of the devils. Their blasphemy was directly against his person and power.

4. We say that their words were against the Holy Spirit *appearing so evident*

dent in the miracles to their reason and senses. They could no less than judge that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit must be there. Their own children or disciples who pretended to the work and the power, though they neither truly did the one, nor really enjoy'd the other, underwent no severe

Joh. x. 37. censure: where then was the reason of reviling the redeemer whose work appeared in reality? It must be very evident to their reason that satan would do what he could to uphold and maintain his own kingdom. If his kingdom is divided against it self, it cannot

2 Cor. ii. 11. stand. If satan cast out satan, then is

2 Cor. xi. 3. his kingdom divided against it self. Tho'

Rev. ii. 24.

Eph. vi. 12. satan has no religion, yet he has more

Luk. xi. 21, reason than so to undermine himself.

22.

That the devil, though a wicked fallen spirit, was in some respects yet very powerful, their reason would readily grant; that to cast him out must be the work of a superior power lays immediate claim to the assent of right reason. That this power must be the infinite power of the spirit of God, was and is very evident from all reason and revelation.

Then as to their outward senses, they heard him speak who had been dumb, they saw his eyes perfectly well, tho' he had been blind, and observ'd him sober

ber and in his right mind, though he had been possess'd. There was nothing of *means wanting* for their full conviction, yet in the face of all they blaspheme so horribly that person and power their consciences could no less than acknowledge.

5. We say miracles wrought by *Christ himself*. Notwithstanding outward *mean- ness*, yet there was a certain *majesty* attended his person, which at times appeared with astonishing evidence. Some particular Emanations of it, would make his disciples follow him trembling, would ^{Mark x. 32;} tye the hands of inveterate enemies, and cast them down to the ground. In his words, in his works did rays of divine and eternal majesty shine his enemies themselves being judges. Yet, though the miracles were wrought by Christ himself, to whom as man, the spirit was given without measure; by Christ ^{Joh. iii. 34.} himself whose eternal power and godhead, together with his special mission as mediator, the miracles did invincibly prove; by Christ himself to whom belonged, and on whom appeared heavenly majesty, the *Pharisees* in the face of all, in the vilest manner blaspheme.

6. We say miracles wrought by Christ himself, *before their eyes*. They were ^{Acts xxvi. 16} not done in a corner, but openly and ²⁶ publickly before friends and foes. They

K heard,

heard, they saw, they felt ; they had all the opportunity of detecting any thing that was but a pretence. The miracles were done before their very faces, they knew they were realities, and that divine power must produce them : and yet after all they cry out, *this fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*

This is a short, yet plain and true account of the nature of the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, so far as we have it revealed in the scriptures. There is no doubt to be made, as was before hinted, but in it there was sin and blasphemy against the son of God, but that which gave it its peculiar denomination, was what it principally aimed at, which was to expose and revile that person and power whereby Christ did work. *But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.* It was a direct blasphemy against the Holy Spirit ; it was his person they call'd *Beelzebub*, it was his power they reviled as *devilish*.

Matt. xii.
28.

What offers it self in the next place to consideration, is what our Lord awfully declares as his will and pleasure as supreme judge of their persons and their crimes. *That blasphemy shall not be forgiven the guilty person, neither in*

in this world, neither in the world to come.

Forgiveness is set forth in scripture by God's blotting out sin, being merciful to unrighteousness, remembering iniquity no more, casting sins behind his back, casting them into the depth of the sea, covering transgression, not imputing iniquity, and such like gracious expressions. On the other hand, where there is no forgiveness, there sin is not blotted out, but stands as a dreadful reckoning in God's righteous book of judgment against the sinner. God will not be merciful unto him, but will remember his iniquity to requite it with strokes of divine vengeance; his sins shall be always under all aggravating circumstances of guilt before God's face, who in an awful manner justly provok'd and incens'd shall in vindictive justice inflict unspeakable torment on the transgressor; and still the sinner not being able to satisfy infinite justice offended, his sins shall be imputed to him, and with the cords of his own sins as with chains of darkness shall be bound under perpetual punishment. Thus it shall be with those who live and die ungodly; and particularly in an awful manner with those guilty of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It shall not be forgiven, neither in this

K 2 world,

world, neither in the world to come. The meaning of which expressions we may briefly consider.

Persons plentifully accomplish'd with *Jewish* learning, tell us, and indeed with great evidence prove what they say, that among the *Jews* by the world to come, three things were understood, the world, days or kingdom of the Messiah, the state of the soul separated from the body, and the state of persons after the resurrection of the dead. * And according to those several acceptations of the world to come, this world was also to be interpreted. When by the world to come the kingdom of the Messiah was understood; then, by this world, was meant that which was to continue till the manifestation of his kingdom. When by the world to come, was understood the state of separate souls; then by this world was meant, all the present time of natural life. When by the world to come, was understood the state of persons after the resurrection of the dead; by this world was meant all that should come to pass until then.

Persons who are blest with abilities, and led by the spirit of God to search

* Drusius in *Mash.* xii. 32. Lightfootus in *Chron. Temp.*
N. T. Sect. 9. aliisque.

the scriptures, and to understand them, will acknowledge, that even there, the world to come passes under the same threefold acceptation.

That by the world to come, may be understood according to scripture, the days and kingdom of the Messiah is very evident. *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. For behold I create new heavens and new earth, and the former shall not be remembred nor come to mind.* The new heavens and new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith the Lord. And *John* the divine in vision, beholding the accomplishment of those promises; says, *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth, were passed away, and there was no more sea.* All which has a special tendency to lead the children of God to that desirable frame of spirit mentioned by the apostle *Peter.* *We according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

That by the world to come, sometimes is understood the separate state of the soul from the body after death, seems also very evident. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they* ^{Tim. vi.} *be*

be not high minded, &c. that they lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. Demas was blamed

^{2 Tim. iv.} by the apostle, for loving this *present world*, whereby we are to understand the things of this life, avoiding the perils, and pursuing the pleasures thereof, in a neglect of the great concerns of his soul in a *separate state*.

That by the world to come sometimes we are to understand the state of the resurrection seems also manifest.

^{Luke xx.}
^{34 35.} And Jesus answering said unto them, *the children of this world marry and are given in marriage; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of the dead neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* Who denies himself and all in this world for Christ, shall *in the world to come* have life everlasting. We are called therefore to live godly in this *present world*, waiting for the blessed hope.

It seems according to the account we have of the Jews, that they entertained very strange notions of forgiveness. Sins of omission, they imagin'd were purged away by *mere repentance*. Sins of commission purged away on the solemn day of *attonement*: sins that deserv'd temporal death, were done away by the *afflictions of this life*:

con-

contempt of, or blasphemy against God forgiven after death, either immediately, or after some time. All which as received by them, were traditional trifles, and lying vanities.

Their expectations were great from the days and kingdom of the Messiah; and indeed not without a great deal of reason, considering the many wonderful promises of grace which eminently refer to that time. Yet, how full and how clear soever forgiveness might be revealed and received in that day, and whatever other notions they might have of forgiveness, and the time thereof, our Lord plainly says, that the blasphemers against the Holy Spirit should not be forgiven, *neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* Which according to the Evangelist *Mark* does intend, that they should *never be for-* ^{Mark. iii.} _{29.} *given.*

The reasons wherefore our Lord did in that awful manner take notice of their crime, and pass judgment upon it as for ever unpardonable, I am far from thinking my self a sufficient person to account for; yet some few things may with humility be offer'd.

i. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not only know all the *persons*, whose sins were laid upon him, but he also distinctly knew all the *sins* that were im-

Pf. xl. 12. puted to him. Tho' *innumerable evils* compassed him about, he did in a most particular manner know them all, together with the different circumstances of aggravation which did attend them. Among them all he knew he did not bear by imputation on himself, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. All *manner* of sins and blasphemies but that he did bear. I do not say he bore *all sins and blasphemies*; but all *manner* of sins and blasphemies, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. So, that alone remains unpardonable, all others being *pardonable*, and have been *pardoned* to thousands.

2. God had determined in his wise counsel never to give repentance to any person that should so blaspheme, but to suffer him to go on into greater degrees of hardness, and commit iniquity with greater greediness.

Persons guilty of all other *sorts* of sins and blasphemies have had repentance given unto them, and they shall still repent. I do not say that *all* such persons do, or shall repent; but, *some* persons guilty of all other *sorts* of sins and blasphemies shall repent and be converted. But in the counsel of God it was otherwise determined concerning those who blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. Repentance should never

be given them. It does not from hence follow, that every one that died impenitent, was therefore a blasphemer against the Holy Spirit. The only thing that is asserted is, that every blasphemer against the Holy Spirit should die impenitent. All other sorts of sinners, some or other of them, shall repent. But concerning this blasphemy, God in his counsel had otherwise determined. And with the counsels and determinations of the Father Christ was well acquainted. *For the father loveth the son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.* Joh. v. 20. No wonder then that our Lord, on such an awful occasion, should tell them that their blasphemy was unpardonable.

3. Hereby Christ shews what an exact judgment he can make, not only of sins and sins, but of the *manner* of sinning, all falls under his notice. His judgment is so *according to truth,* Rom. ii. 2. that he will not, that he cannot in the least mistake one sin for the other. All manner of sins, and all manner of distinguishing circumstances that may belong to them shall fall exactly under his notice. It was impossible to sin, but in one manner a sin that was indeed unpardonable; and here, our Lord presently discovers it; and immediately

diatey mentions what must inevitably follow.

4. Here our Lord Jesus shewed his wonderful *providence*, in restraining sin among the unconverted; for all his elect ones in an unconverted state, were to be under that restraint, tho' they were not aware thereof, that they should not so transgress with their lips. They were all of them pardoned, and to be pardoned, therefore unpardonable transgressions shall not by them be committed.

5. Christ Jesus would give unto the world an instance of his being *final Judge*, passing by way of anticipation

Joh. v. 22. A&t. xvii. 31. sentence upon them on the spot. All judgment is committed to the son; and by him the world shall be judged in righteousness.

6. Where any, or all the reasons mentioned may seem weak and deficient, the sovereignty of Christ will sufficiently plead for it self in the breasts of the faithful. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good unto him.*

Thus the sin of the Pharisees, and the sentence of Christ, the nature of the one, and the reason of the other, with brevity, plainness and truth have been impartially considered according to the account we have thereof in the word of God. The possibility or the impossibility

possibility of committing that unpardonable transgression now under the Gospel-dispensation, must in the next place be the subject of our humble inquiry. It may perhaps at a blush, seem strange to some of God's children, that such an article should be proposed to be inquired into : the possibility of the sin being in the christian world generally taken for granted. But perhaps this is not the only thing among the children of men took for granted, which may yet deserve to pass under a more particular examination. However, a due search after truth, is not the way to lose it. We are commanded to *cry after knowledge*, and lift up our voice for *understanding*, to *seek her* as silver, and to *search* for her as for hid treasures. In our search we must walk in the paths of right reason, which always looketh unto and resteth in divine revelation, handed down to us in sacred scripture.

Pro. ii. 3, 4.

Joh. v. 39.

Having attempted the search, I think my self bound to acknowledge, according to the best understanding of holy scripture I have yet attained unto, that all things under the present dispensation being consider'd, it is impossible for any person or persons now to commit that unpardonable transgression.

What

What millions may affirm, and many may fear in this case, is not so very material; it is truth alone that will abide the last trial. Let truth now decide the matter, and in the face of all traditions, insinuations, suggestions and fears, let our consciences therein acquiesce. For a confirmation of what I have asserted, I shall offer at this time but one consideration or two unto the thoughtful and impartial; knowing that *Pondere, non numero vincunt rationes.*

First then, I would have the reader consider that no sin that may or can be committed now in the world, can possibly pass under the same definition with that unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, whereof we have the account in scripture. We have observed that according to scripture light, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as the Pharisees stood guilty of it, was *a wrathful breaking out in the most reviling words, against the Holy Spirit of God, appearing so evident to their reason and senses, in the miracles wrought by Christ himself before their eyes.* Now, consider all the transgressors upon the earth, and all the transgressions whereof they may be supposed capable of being guilty, and see if any of their crimes may be

so defined. That they sin, and blaspheme, is a truth which calls for sorrow and mourning; that they may utter dreadful reviling words against the Holy Spirit of God is too well known; but still this they cannot do as the Pharisees then did, who so reviled the Holy Ghost, who very evidently appeared in the miracles wrought by Christ himself before their eyes. To say, that they would do so, if they were but left and had the same opportunity does not reach the case; for, according to that, all men must be alike guilty of the unpardonable crime, being by nature alike vicious. Our Lord judges of the crime indeed according to the demerit thereof in the strictest sense, all circumstances that relate to it being duly considered. Sins that cannot be in the same manner defined, can never by him be judged to be sins of the same sort. His judgment is according to the highest truth. That which was the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost then, must, if it can be found, be the very same now. It must have the same aggravating circumstances of sinfulness to attend it, or it is not the same sin. Christ himself must be personally on the earth, proving his eternal Godhead, as the only son of God, and his commission

Eph. ii. 3.
Rom. iii. 9.

Gen. xviii.
25.
Rom. ii. 2.

as

as Mediator by miracles, wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, and that in the presence of the children of men, or they cannot be capable of committing this evil. Thus the case stood then, and in the face of all, some of them in the greatest rage and fury said, that by *Beelzebub* the miracles were wrought; and the scripture tells us, in a few, yet plain words, what made up their sin, and what was the cause of their sentence, *Because they said, he hath an unclean spirit.* Christ himself was present, wrought those astonishing miracles before their eyes, by the spirit of God, was thereupon in some measure honoured by the multitude as the son of *David*; whereupon their rage broke out into the most horrid blasphemy against the spirit; as has been opened. Now, that sin which does not agree to the definition of this, is not the same sin; for what is just the same, will bear to be defined exactly in the same manner *. Yea all circumstances must be duly regarded, not one thing must be left out †. Now, the consequence seems to any impartial mind, to bid very fair

* Unius rei, unica est definitio. † Quæcumque sunt eadem, etiam prædicata habent eadem, & ipsa de iisdem prædicantur. Quæ sunt eadem, sunt in eodem prædicamento habent idem genus, habent easdem differentias.

for

for acceptance. For if the sin, whatever name it may pass under among the children of men, be not the very same with that which the scripture tells us, was the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, then it is not unpardonable; for our Lord plainly affirms, that all manner of sin but that should be forgiven. Let the nature of the thing, and the words of our Lord determine the case, and the question is at an end. To tell us that a sin that comes *near it*, tho' it does not answer in *every particular*, may be judged unpardonable, is the same as to tell us that a sin which comes near unto *that* may also undergo the same censure; which course will inevitably make *all* sins unpardonable. We must keep to the very sin which our Lord judged unpardonable, or there will be no end. He tells us that all manner of sin but that shall be pardoned. That sin, or rather that blasphemy has been impartially defined. No sin now upon the face of the earth can answer that definition. The consequence is plain, no unpardonable sin can now be committed.

Secondly, Our Lord Jesus Christ in plain words delivers his mind unto us in this weighty affair; and by his very words let it be for ever decided. *If I Joh.xv.24 had not done among them the works which*

which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my father.

No person in the exercise of reason can imagine that our Lord's being among 'em, made 'em sin. He was perfectly holy in himself, and could not be the cause of what is contrary to holiness in another. Indeed *Paul* tells us,

Rom. vii.
8, 12.

that tho' the commandment was holy, yet sin in him, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in him all manner of concupiscence; the commandment still continu'd and appeared very holy, but sin, that it might appear sin, working death in him, by that which was good manifested it self to be exceeding sinful. This, tho' an instance of a lower degree, may serve to set forth the case before us. Christ, who was greater than the law, tho' in a sense, he was made under the law, that he might

Rm. xiii. 21. magnify it, and make it honourable, was among them. In him the life, the love and law of God shined most eminently; sin in them took occasion thereby to work them up to all exorbitant measures of wickedness. If Christ had not appeared among them, they would have been, as they always were, a poor sinful people; but now from his exceeding goodness, they take unto themselves

selves an occasion of manifesting excessive wickedness.

Not but that they had on many other occasions discover'd as vile a nature as could be possess'd by any People ; for, they had done evil *as they could* ; they had done in many things worse than the heathen ; but, as they never had such an opportunity, so they never were capable of discovering so much iniquity as when Christ appeared among them, doing the works which none other man did. The promised Messiah, the *de-* Hagg. ii. 7. *fire of all nations* was come among them. He was *fairer* than the chil- Psal. xlvi. *dren of men*, anointed with the oil of *gladnes above his fellows*, the spirit of the Lord God without measure did rest upon him, the works which he did, they testify'd for him ; no man did work like him, no man did speak like him, yet his *incomparable* glory they turned into an occasion of *unparallel'd* iniquity.

Now, our Lord plainly tells us, that if he, observe, that if he *himself*, had not done such works among them, observe again, *among them*, works that must be seen by them, they had not had sin. Where, by sin, the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit must necessarily be understood.

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For,

For, if now by their having of sin, we must understand their having *greater* sin, it is impossible but the *greatest* sin must be included. No considerate person can ever imagine that our Lord would have said, if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they might have had the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit indeed, but they had not had such great sin upon 'em as they have now : the unpardonable blasphemy being confessedly the greatest that could be found among the carnal, reviling unconverted *Jews*. The argument in the words stands fair ; such as do not see Jesus Christ among them doing the works which none other man did, have not upon them that great sin : under the present dispensation no persons in the world see Jesus Christ among them doing the works which none other man did ; therefore no persons now in the world can have upon them that great sin.

The *proposition* is in our Lord's own words, unto which our reason must submit, and according to which our thoughts in all things must be guided: the *assumption* is what every body knows to be true. Our Lord is not here, he is risen; and the heavens must contain

contain him until the time of the resti-
tution of all things.

According unto the judgment of Je-
sus Christ himself, who is truth it self,
the *Jews*, the blasphemers against the
Holy Ghost among them, had not had
sin, that is, such sin had they not with
their own bodily eyes, seen Christ's
own works. It was not a thing they
heard of, as done at a distance, but what
approached so near, as neither their rea-
son, nor sense could so much as questi-
on.

It is a different case with persons in
succeeding ages, who have the history
of those miracles with them and among
them : for it is well known that believers
shall never be suffer'd thus to blaspheme ;
as for unbelievers, they give no such
credit to the scriptures, as to make the
things reported there so real to their
own consciences, as if they saw them
with their eyes. What they do, they
do in unbelief.

There is no question to be made but
persons have wickedness enough in them,
so to transgress, had they opportunity ;
but as the case now stands, they do not
see Christ working miracles among them,
therefore they are not in a capacity of
blaspheming so against the Holy Spirit,
as the Pharisees then did.

It is observable, that *Stephen* in that wonderful discourse of his unto the *Jews*, wherein he useth all plainness with them, does not say in the application, you *blasphemers* against the Holy Ghost;

Act. vii. 51. but, *ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye.* They *resisted* the Holy Spirit in his word, works and servants, but he does not say that they or any of them, blasphemed against the Holy Ghost. As their fathers did in the time of the pro-

Ifa lxiii. 10, phets, so did they. Their fathers *rebelled and vexed the Holy Spirit of God,* whereupon in the course of his providence he did fight against them, nevertheless he remembred the days of old, the works he had done for them and his gracious covenant with them, whereupon the spirit of the Lord caused them again to rest, to make unto himself a glorious name. Thus their fathers rebelled and resisted, and thus their fathers were many of them recover'd; and as their fathers did, so did they. But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost he does as good as own to be of another consideration.

And it is observable, that the holy apostles in their sermons and writings, which relate unto the dispensation of the gospel after the ascension of Christ, make

make no mention of the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, nor do they give any cautions concerning it. The highest I find is that of *Paul* unto the *Jews*, *Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets ; behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish ; for I work a work in your days, a work you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.* Which is as much as if he had said, take heed lest in the face of so much light you live and die unbelievers. But the unpardonable blasphemy is not meant here ; for it is well known in the christian world, that many have seen, wonder'd, and despis'd, who yet were afterwards thro' grace brought to believe, and to yield themselves up unto the Lord.

Having thus far proceeded, it remains that now we should briefly look upon and remove some things which may seem to stop the free course of that desirable truth which we have asserted, and in some measure according to the word of the Lord established.

It is granted indeed, that the sin of *Cain* in hating and murdering his brother was very great. There were many aggravating circumstances that at-

tended it. *Abel* was his brother, and gave him no provocation; but being a man of faith doubtless pray'd for him, and perform'd all the good offices which natural relation and super-natural religion oblig'd him to. It was very manifest

Heb. xi. 4. Gen. iv. 4. that God *respected Abel, and his offering,*

and several ways made it evident that he had a standing interest in his grace and love. All which laid *Cain* under manifold obligations to love, honour, and serve his brother. But, tho' the near relation, the blessed qualifications, and happy circumstances of *Abel* had a special tendency in themselves to engage his brother's profoundest respect and tenderest regard; nevertheless, such was *Cain*'s wickedness, that from all that was good in *Abel*, he took occasion to entertain and nourish in his breast the most inveterate hatred which issued in the

Joh. iii. 12. most bloody murder. *Cain* is said to be of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Yet notwithstanding, tho' the sin was very heinous, it was not the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. For the apostle immediately adds, *marvel not my brethren if the world hate you.* As if he had said, you can expect to find nothing in the world, but the same spirit that dwelt in

Cain;

Cain; nor can you expect to meet with any thing from the world, but the same treatment that *Abel* met with from his brother, as opportunity offers it self. From thence all the persecutions, blood-shed, murder, and massacres for the sake of religion. But it is very evident, that tho' the sins of those followers of *Cain* are very great, yet not unpardonable; for, many persons from age to age deeply concerned in such iniquities have been thro' grace converted. Which makes it plain, that his sin was not the unpardonable blasphemy. I do not say that his sin was pardoned; but that his sin in it self was not unpardonable; for, others guilty thereof have been made partakers of pardoning grace. The Argument runs fair, *Paul* breath'd out threatnings and slaughter against the *disciples of the Lord*, and what was ^{A&t. ix. 1.} worse than death compell'd 'em to blaspheme; yet, was pardoned; *Cain* breath'd out threatnings and slaughter against *Abel* a disciple of the Lord, was therefore guilty of a sin but of the same nature, and therefore not unpardonable. That singular interpretation of *Gen. iv. 7.* tho' the present case depends not in the least upon it, may deserve a particular regard. *If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door:*

L 4

that

that is, *sin-offering* is ready, repent and believe *.

Num. xv.
§o.

Psal. li. 16.

Again, it is granted, that there was no sacrifice under the old testament provided for him that sinned presumptuously, or with an *high hand*, according to the Holy Ghost's expression, but temporal death was to follow, whether he repented or not. But it does not follow, that the sin was therefore the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit ; no more than it follows that cursing of parents, murder, and adultery were such, because there were no sacrifices provided for them. How *David* was guilty of bloodshed and adultery is very well known ; and in a penitential way to the Lord he says, *Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it.* There were no typical sacrifices appointed for such crimes ; therefore *David*, tho' he repented, yet he sacrificed not. What God did not expressly desire, *David* would not superstitiouly offer. But, tho' there were no *typical* sacrifices appointed, the sins of *David* were pardoned ; and the sins of others in a like case were not unpardonable. We find it said indeed,

* ΤΑῦτα sacrificium expiatorum pro peccato ad ostium cubat. Solebant enim sacrificia poni ad ostium sanctuarii in Levitico. Hic verus sensus videtur. Nam scopus dei est Cainum erigere. Dr. Lightfoot.

of the presumptuous sinner, that he reproached the Lord, despised the word of the Lord, and broke his commandment. But tho' there was no sacrifice then for this sin of reproaching the Lord, there remained a sufficient one for it. For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. That David despised the commandment is expressly affirmed by Nathan the prophet; who, at the same time tells him, that the Lord had put away his sin. It was not without great reason that David desired the Lord not only to cleanse him from secret faults, but also to keep him back from presumptuous sins, that they might not have dominion over him. Wherein is plainly implied, that he had been too often ensnared with them; and in what follows it is evidently expressed, that God in being gracious to him, according to his petitions, would deliver him from much transgression, as the original hath it, but if we keep to the word as in our translation, *the great transgression*, its far from proving any unpardonable blasphemy to be intended. For thy names sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.

It must be also granted, that the greater the knowledge is, which persons sin against, the greater is the sin. The nature

Rom.xv.3.

2 Sam. 12,
9, 13.

Pf. xix. 12,
13.

Pf. xxv. 11.

ture of the thing, right reason, and scripture revelation make this very evident. The very *heathen* are accused as guilty of aggravated crimes, in that they

Rom. i. 21. glorified not God, according to that knowledge which they had of God.

Dan. v. 22. wickedness of *Belshazzar* was so much the greater in that he persisted therein, tho' he knew what awful judgments God had inflicted upon his father.

1 King. xi. 9. sin of *Solomon* was so much the greater in that it was after God had appeared to him twice.

The more consultation, contrivance, or deliberation any sin is committed with, the greater that sin must be esteemed. But still to sin with deliberation against knowledge is not the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. I perswade my self I need not here stand to explain, nor indeed so much as to mention scripture instances of persons who greatly sinned in the face of special improved knowledge, yet numbered amongst the pardoned ones of God. He who cannot find them, both under the old and new testament, understandeth not what he readeth.

Again, to sin in *wrath*, rage and *madness* against the kingdom and cause of Christ must doubtless aggravate the guilt. When persons act with violence and rage against God, ignorance is in a sense a

1 Tim. i. 13, mercy to them. *Paul* says, that before

conversion, he was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, he shewed no mercy; nevertheless, there was mercy followed him even then; in that he was kept back from sinning so against knowledge. It was in a sense a mercy to him that he did it in ignorance and unbelief. Tho' he looks upon himself the greatest of sinners, yet he would have been a greater still, if all that he did, had been done against knowledge. But I obtained mercy, because *I did it ignorantly and in unbelief.* The apostle would not have us think surely, that the *reason* why he obtained the mercy of conversion was, because he sinned in ignorance and unbelief. Had that been the cause or reason of his conversion, then all ignorant and unbelieving people must infallibly partake of the same privilege. But the plain meaning of the expression is this, even while I was injurious and unmerciful, I obtained mercy, tho' I knew it not till afterwards. It was a mercy I was not suffered to sin as I did against knowledge. True believers can look back with thankfulness at the remembrance of restraining grace which followed them in their unconverted state. They look upon themselves as the greatest and the vilest of sinners, and esteem it a mercy they were not left to be worse. The thing sought for in this instance

instance of *Paul* is plain; to sin with rage and madness against the cause of God is not the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Tho' he was a blasphemer, yet he became afterwards an eminent convert to Christ, and a wonderful preacher of that faith which

Gal. i. 23. once he destroyed.

In the next place, to sin in anger, wrath, and rage against the *known will of God*, must indeed in an awful manner aggravate the guilt, and make the sin exceeding great. Perhaps I need not tell the reader, that thus the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost has often been *described*. And to illustrate the description, *Peter* they say sinned against great knowledge, in denying his master, but not with wrath and malice. *Paul* sinned in great wrath and anger, but not against knowledge. Had knowledge and wrath met in either of 'em, then the sin had been unpardonable. I must take the freedom to observe, that all this is but taken for granted, and never has been, never can be fairly proved. Unto me a wilful wrathful opposition to known truth, is so far from being a satisfactory account of the unpardonable blasphemy, that it evidently makes a godly prophet, and indeed all believers in the world guilty thereof.

I. Such

i. Such a description of the unpardonable sin will evidently make *Jonah*, that man of God, guilty thereof. That he had knowledge, eminent, improved, yea, inspired knowledge is manifest. How in wrath, anger and rage he sinned against God in the face of all that knowledge, the history of him informs us. *Jonah's* anger was not only against poor mortals, like himself, but against the Lord, who had but very lately saved him in, and brought him out of the whale's belly. What God had manifested of his pleasure concerning the poor *Ninevites*, it is said, *displeased* Jon. iv. 1; *Jonah exceedingly, and he was* very angry. Yea, his anger was in a special manner directed against God's mercy, his beloved attribute wherein he delighteth. A good man is said to be Mic. vii. 18; merciful to his beast, *Jonah* would shew no mercy to his fellow-sinners, but was angry with God for shewing any mercy to them. Neither was this a sin, he was suddenly surpriz'd into, but what with deliberation he took up in his own country, and had the face now to tell the Lord so. O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my own country. It was no sudden passion, in it he justifies his former rebellion, therefore I fled to Tarshish. Upon consideration it still encreased upon him, for Jon. iv. 2.

for God puts it to him to consider whether he did well? he went out of the city, made him a booth, sat under it in the shadow, still in great rage, wherein he manifested the greatest ingratitude towards God, hatred against his pity and mercy; and cruelty, not considering himself, towards poor sinners. After some time God puts it to him again, whether he did well to *be angry?* in direct opposition unto God,

Jon. iv. 9. he affirms, that *he did well to be angry even unto death.* Here is malice, inveterate anger; here is envy, grieving at another's good; and all in *Jonah*, a man of enlarged, inspired knowledge. If a wilful, wrathful, malicious opposition to the known will of God be the unpardonable blasphemy, then *Jonah* was guilty of it; but *Jonah* notwithstanding his sins, was a godly pardoned man, never being guilty of any unpardonable blasphemy; therefore a wilful, wrathful, malicious opposition to the known will of God, is not the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

2. Such a description of the unpardonable sin would make all persons in the world, believers themselves not excepted, guilty of it. As to the profane and persecuting part of the

Psal. xiv. 4. world; *have all the workers of iniquity*

no knowledge? yes, they have, and enmity too: for they are filled with carnality of mind; and it is very evident that the carnal mind is enmity against God. Now, according to Rom. viii. this description all unconverted persons⁷. in the world must be guilty of the unpardonable blasphemy; for some knowledge they have, *against* which they sin, and a great deal of wrath and enmity against God they have *wherein* they sin. And if we look upon converted persons, according unto this description, their case is in no sense better than that of others. Their knowledge indeed may be said to be *greater*, and of a *higher* kind, which, if this description be true, will only serve to make their sins, and consequently their punishment greater. For sin they have in them; and if enmity against God is not in the nature of all sin, then the scripture gives us no true account of it. It is not in vain that believers themselves are beseeched *to be reconciled* ^{2Cor.v.20} *to God*. The sins of believers have no better nature than the sins of others. Whatever construction they may put upon their crimes, the true nature of them stands in a wrathful opposition unto God and his law *. Hence,

the

* Hence is sin by some call'd *deicidium*, a slaughtering of God; because every sin being enmity to God, doth virtually include

the case is plain; all sin is a wrathful opposition unto, and enmity against God; all believers have sin in them; all believers have a wrathful opposition unto, and emnity against God in them. Again, all the sins of believers are pardonable; the sins of believers are often against knowledge, and have always in their nature a wrathful opposition unto God; therefore, sins against the knowledge of God, in a wrathful opposition unto God are pardonable.

As to H E B . vi. 4, 5, 6. H E B . x. 26. I J O H N v. 16. there is already given, I hope, to satisfaction, a plain, consistent, scriptural exposition of the several texts at large; making it evident, that the sinners there mentioned, should not be look'd upon as in a desperate condition, but as partakers of everlasting salvation in the Lord. To which I refer the reader.

What the saints formerly thought of Julian the apostate, and what Spira a long while after thought of himself, I pass by as their mistake.

But if any person would know wherefore the unpardonable blasphemy is recorded, if it cannot now be committed,

include in its nature the destruction of God. Charnock's discourse of man's enmity. P. 41.

let

Let him consider that God had a mind to inform him, that as the son of man had power to forgive sins upon earth, so he had power to condemn for sin upon earth. *All judgment was committed unto the son:* Matt. ix. 6. Joh. v. 22.

Again, thus the Lord sheweth unto man, for his humiliation and self-abasement, what is in his nature, having opportunity, and being left unto himself.

Are we better than they? no, in nowise. Rom. iii. 9.

Now the reader is desired to observe, that what has been said does not deny there being of the *sin* against the Holy Ghost. Tho' the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot now be found among the children of men; yet sins against him every where abound. It is firmly believed by those who are christians *indeed*, that the Holy Ghost is the eternal God, co-essential, co-eternal, co-equal with the father and son. All sin may be said to be against the Holy Ghost, in that all sin is against God. To lye unto God, and to lye unto the *Holy Ghost*. Act. v. 4, 5.

Nor is there any question to be made, but there are some sins among the wicked that more directly oppose the person, power, and operations of the spirit. Which may be called *resisting* the Act. vii. 51. Holy Ghost.

M

Among

Among professors of religion there
 Isa. lxiii. 10. may be such a thing found as *rebelling*
 against, and *vexing* of the Holy Spirit ;
 by disobeying his commands, motions,
 and dictates, and taking part with the
 world and the flesh.

It is very evident, that there may be
 Eph. iv. 30. such a thing among the godly as *grieving*
 the spirit of God, that Holy Spirit
 whereby they are sealed unto the day
 of redemption. All these are sins against
 the Holy Ghost, and according as they
 are circumstantiated, are to be esteemed
 greater or lesser. But as for the unpar-
 donable blasphemy, that is of another na-
 ture.

Heb. x. 29. What it is to do *despight* to the spirit
 of grace, has been in its due place con-
 sider'd, and with some evidence refer'd
 to that opposition to the spirit of grace
 in the ministry of the apostles, found
 among the unbelieving persecuting *Jews*.

In what has been said, there is no-
 thing at all intimated that gives unto
 any person the least *liberty* to sin. Tho'
 there is no such thing under the gospel
 dispensation, as that unpardonable blas-
 phemy, some of the *Jews* were guilty
 of; yet, this is plain throughout the
 Joh. iii. 36. gospel, so that he that runs may read it,
 that all who live and dye in unbelief
 and sin are damned. And according
 to the whole revealed will of God,
 aggravated

aggravated crimes unrepented of, procure more intolerable punishments. Let a man be what he will, unless he is born again, he cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. *Joh. iii. 3.*

Nor can it by any means be infer'd from what has been asserted, that *apostasie* should not in a special manner be feared. It has been already granted, that there are great sins committed by persons who make a profession of the gospel. And very plain it is, that it is the indispensable duty of all such persons to watch against all sin ; yea, to abstain from all appearance of evil. As the sins of believers, all circumstances being consider'd, may justly be esteem'd the greatest of sins ; so it appears to be their great duty in a special manner to take *heed lest they fall*. As their backsliding from God is a great sin against God, and brings great reproach upon the name of God, so it carries them into a comfortless, useless life. The bad consequences thereof cannot be express. How long they may be suffer'd to lie in such a condition, before their bones *Psal. li. 8.* shall be healed, the great physician only must determine.

As for apostasie in any professor, it looks dark and dismal, false-hearted professors have been made sincere-hearted believers ; but when false-hearted pro-

fessors have turned into open profaneness and irreligion, their recovery has not

^{1 Tim. iii. 13.} been observ'd to be common. Generally speaking black and bitter apostasie has followed them to their graves.

^{2 Pet. ii. 20.} *Wicked men grow worse and worse.*

Nevertheless, some such have been made by mighty grace, to witness for the salvation of God. From what our fathers have told us, and our selves observed, instances might be produced; making it plain, tho' their apostasie was dismal, that their sin was not that unpardonable blasphemy. So leaving room for godly fear and hope.

What has been said in this poor inconsiderable essay confirms indeed a glorious gospel truth, that there is no sin now in it self unpardonable. The particular exception is now removed out of the way of that precious indefinite declaration of grace; all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven to the children of men. Therefore our Lord leaves it in command with his dis-

^{Mark xvi. 15.} ciples to go and preach the gospel to every creature; let 'em be never so base and sinful. Preach the gospel to 'em all. Some of all sorts of 'em shall be saved. All sorts of sins shall be suffer'd to be committed by some or other of God's elect, for all manner of sins shall be pardoned. When Christ in a more distinct manner

manner instructed Peter to go and preach the gospel to the poor *Gentiles* in vision there was a sheet let down Act. x. 12,
before him, wherein were all manner of 13, 14, 15. unclean creeping things. How vile, how unclean, how unworthy soever, a poor sinner may be, he may find himself in Peter's sheet among the rest ; for there were all manner of poor vile creatures to be seen.

It is indeed impossible for me to explain sin in all the instances and circumstances thereof ; but this is what I think my self obliged in the name of the Lord Jesus still to proclaim ; *Whosoever cometh unto him, he will Joh. vi. 37. in no wise cast out.*

There is no soul in the world too great a sinner to be saved ; yea, where sin hath abounded, grace did, doth, and shall much more abound. Rom.v.20. Blessed is that poor creature who is made as the greatest, the chiefest of sinners to venture himself upon Jesus Christ as the great, the suitable, the only saviour.





Some Meditations on the great Design of Christ.

I TIM. I. 15.

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy
of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus
came into the world to save sinners,
of whom I am chief.*



THE very nature of the work before us, calls upon us to take notice of that consideration which led the apostle to the words of the text. The experience he had of the grace of God to his own soul, was that which was fresh and comfortable upon his mind while writing this epistle. His own exceeding

sinful-

sinfulness, together with the exceeding abundant *grace* of God to him, in the foregoing verses he makes mention of, the precious prevalent power of all sufficient grace, he had tasted, and upon deep, and delightful *experience* thereof, he recommends salvation by the free grace of God thro' Jesus Christ, unto the consideration, and *acceptance* of other poor, weary, heavy-laden and distressed souls. Their misery he knew experimentally, and the remedy he was really acquainted with. He was converted and anointed that he might preach the gospel; he was called to God's *foot*, that he might go on God's Isa. xli. 2. errand. Thus were others fitted for service before him. Under the experience of pardoning, renewing, comforting grace and love, they taught Psal. li. 13. *transgressors the way of God, and sinners were converted to him.* As of old, so to this day thus Christ sendeth forth his dear servants.

Having seen the *glory* of Christ, and how by their own *sinfulness* they were *undone*; having had some special discoveries of full, free, and perpetual *pardon*, together with a *call* from Isa. vi. 5, 6. God to undertake the work; in the face of difficulties and dangers then are they willing to be sent. That which they have *seen and heard*, they

declare unto others, in order to promote heavenly communion in all its branches. They have learnt in the school of Christ, how to speak a word in *season to him that is weary.* They can declare unto others what God *has done* for their own souls. Their own dangers they remember, their deliverances they can sing, and their duty they embrace; *not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.* They love the Lord, they love his work, they pity poor sinners, they know their misery, their darkness, and their death. The ineffable unalterable *love* of the father, the compleat and everlasting *salvation* of Christ following upon, and flowing from that love, the precious distinguishing *operations* of the spirit, growing as agreeable fruit out of both, they have experienced; and continue to live in the taints thereof, proclaiming and publishing by all ways and means the same to all about 'em, as assisted and called. They *have* the word of Christ, and preach it; they have the spirit of faith, they *believe, and therefore speak.* The true experience of the powerful and gracious operations of the spirit in regeneration, is a qualification absolutely necessary for a Gospel-minister. I grant it is not the only qualification necessary, God has other gifts

*Isa. l. 4.
Pf. lxvi. 16.*

1 Pet. v. 2.

*Jer. xxiii.
28.*

2 Cor. iv. 13.

gifts to furnish such a servant withal. But, let men flatter themselves how they please, it will appear 'ere long, that without regeneration there is no commission from God to preach the gospel. *For unto the wicked*

Psal. l. 16.

(all unconverted persons are such) *God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?* all unregenerate persons, whatever denomination they pass under, have no other spirit but that of unbelief; and it seems a very improbable thing, that any should preach the *faith* of the gospel in the spirit of *unbelief*. The nature, the causes, the difficulties, the supports, the hindrances, the encouragements, the excellency and the end of the faith of God's elect, a man that walks in the spirit of unbelief knows nothing of. Whatever notions such a person may attain to of the truth, his soul still dwells at an awful *distance* from it. He has no *fellowship with the mystery*. Whatever natural or acquired parts such persons may be possessors of, they are like to make but poor Gospel-preachers. How can they preach the grace of Christ, who never *tasted that the Lord is gracious*? how can they preach the work of the spirit in conversion, sanctification, consolation; or in any part of evangelical edification, who never experienced

¹ Pet. ii. 30.

perienced his gracious operations? how can they open the nature of faith who never believed? what can we expect from such, but that which more or less, directly or indirectly opposeth the everlasting love and grace of God, the glorious person and fulness of Christ, the eternal spirit, and his special work

^{2 Tim. iv.} as comforter of the church? they speak
^{10.} and act differently or indifferently according as their opportunity, company, carnal wisdom and base ends may *incline* them. How the cause of Christ in general groans under the burden of unsanctified preachers and preaching, I leave the godly to judge.

Paul and others of God's faithful servants had the word of reconciliation ^{2 Cor. v. 19.} committed unto them, or put into them; and from an inward taste of the grace of the gospel under the assistance of the spirit of God, they preach'd it to others. So the text before us is brought in. Where we have,

1. A preface to what the apostle is about to affirm: *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.*

2. The glorious doctrine it self. *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

3. A particular application in faith of this salvation to himself, together with the judgment he made of himself,

as

as in himself consider'd, *of whom I am chief.*

Several propositions of truth from the words, are offer'd to our consideration, which I shall put into the following order.

I. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

II. Some of the chief, or the greatest of sinners have been, are, and shall be saved by Jesus Christ.

III. It is a possible thing for a poor soul to see himself the chief of sinners, and yet be well assured at the same time, of his standing interest in the salvation of Christ.

IV. Whosoever preaches the salvation of Christ, as free and full to the chief of sinners, preaches the faithful truth.

V. The salvation of Christ so truly and faithfully preached or published, is worthy of all acceptance.

It is very evident from the whole current of scripture, that man's happiness consists in some special *nearness* to God. ^{Psal. cxlviii.} _{14.}

God. According to the revealed will of God, that nearness which does indeed constitute man's happiness stands in relation, conformity, friendship, communion and enjoyment. But miserable man, ever since the fall by nature dwells at an awful distance from God the chiefest good. His misery is such, that he has neither will, nor power, nor knowledge how to return of himself; nor has he any true sense of his wretchedness on that account, which is an unspeakable *addition* to his unhappiness.

Hof. xiii. 9. By sin he has lost all. He has *destroyed*

Eph. ii. 1. himself, and is by nature *dead* in sins and trespasses. Nevertheless such is the super-abounding grace of God, that he is resolved to bring sinful man nearer to himself than ever. The gospel declares after what manner he brings about this wonderful design of surprizing preventing grace. There we find the

Heb. x. 19, *new and living way* consecrated for the

20. use of poor sinners. Christ is the *way*,

Joh. xiv. 6. *the truth, and the life, there is no coming to the father but by him.* He is the father's *beloved*, and in him *we are accepted*. The whole gospel reveals him to be a most agreeable way of access. The words are plain, and commonly express'd; the mystery is great, and but little understood. To set forth Christ as the only way of access to the father, is

is

is not the only end of the gospel ; for the preaching of it is also to make the way of a poor sinner plain, so that he may come to Christ the mediator as he ought. Many who are convinced in some measure of the folly of approaching the father's presence without the mediation of Christ, fall into another error of setting up mediators between them and Christ. Generally speaking, their own apprehended good qualifications and moral performances are made use of for that end. According as they please, or displease 'em, their transient comfort rises or falls. Some there are indeed who under a more quick and terrible, or under a more stupid and dull, yet equally dangerous sort of despondency conclude their sins too great to be forgiven. Some languish under hesitations, doubts and fears from what they feel at present in themselves, or from want of feeling; others, are preparing themselves, and hope to hope hereafter when better fitted for it ; and there are those who think themselves in as good case as their neighbours, taking little or no thought about the matter, miserably sleeping on in the wilful neglect of all salvation. It is impossible to express the various, miserable circumstances of the children of men, under the conduct of their
depraved

Jer. ii. 5. depraved inclinations, and their own
Pf. xciv. 11. imaginations, which on all occasions
1 Cor. iii. 20. sufficiently prove themselves to be foolish
 and vain.

Ifa. lvii. 14. The design of our work, in subordination to the glory of God, is to remove the stumbling-blocks out of the way of the weak in faith, and to signify unto the greatest of sinners crying after salvation, that there is immediate access to Christ, as the only and sufficient saviour. Subservient unto that design the several propositions already mentioned, shall in their order under divine assistance be briefly explained.

Prop. I. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Heb. ii. 16. The persons in misery are said to be sinners: meaning those of the sons of men; for, Christ took not upon him the nature of angels. Sinners are *Rom. vii. 12.* transgressors of the law of God; for, *sin is the transgression of the law.* The law is every way holy, just, and good; whatsoever is so, the law commandeth; whatsoever is not so, the law forbiddeth. That which has the least appearance of unholiness, injustice, or evil in it, is so far a transgression of the law, and the person guilty is denominated a sinner. *Jam. ii. 10.* Yea, the law of God is of that nature, that the person guilty of the breach of one

one commandment is esteemed a transgressor of the whole law. And, upon the least sin, the voice of the law is, thou *shall die the death*; or dying thou Gen. ii. 17. shalt die.

Adam sinned not only as our natural, but also as our covenant head. That doctrine universally received among true christians, that we, all who proceed from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression, is a truth which shines with great evidence in the sacred scriptures. There we find it plainly asserted, that by one man, meaning *Adam*, sin entered into the world. Not only himself became sinful, but all the world of men, because all sinned *& in him*. According unto the sovereign counsel of God, and agreeable Rom.v.12, 15, 16, 17, 18. unto all the laws of nature, *Adam*, the father of us all, who was himself created upright, was constituted our common head and publick person. Upon his sin, judgment came upon all to condemnation. The God of truth, whose judgment is Rom.ii. 2. always according to truth, judged us all sinners in him, and consequently under the condemnation of the law. It does not concern us much to consider what judgment the children of men may pass upon themselves, whether they alleviate, 1 Cor.iv. 3. or whether they aggravate their original 4.

original guilt ; for he *that judgeth us is the Lord*. Whether our reason, now languishing under weakness and depravity will submit or not, divine revelation plainly informs us, that we are not only destitute of original righteousness, not only without the fellowship, communion and refreshing presence of God, the chiefest good, but that we are posi-

Rom. iii. 9. tively *under sin*, and by *nature* the chil-
Eph. ii. 3. dren of *wrath*, shapen in *iniquity*, and
Psal. li. 5. conceived in *sin*. All the world not an
Rom. iii. 19. infant excepted, is thus *become guilty before God*. By the offence of one, or by one offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.

Moreover, we did not only sin in Adam, but did also derive a defiled polluted nature from him. *Adam*, as is plain by his carriage towards God, immediately after his fall, was by his sin polluted and defiled throughout. He **Gen. iii. 8.** went to *hide himself from the presence of the Lord*, and being called forth, he wickedly excuseth himself, hideth his sin, and chargeth God with folly. His children he begat in his own image, **Gen. v. 3.** for *what is born of the flesh, is flesh*. The sin which proceeded from his heart, defiled the man, and all his iniquity **Joh. iii. 6.** unavoidably follows upon iniquity, and no man can bring a *clean thing out of*

Rom. vi. 19.

of an *unclean*. By nature the body is Job. xiv. 4 under universal corruption, and all the members thereof instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. The soul it self, the most noble part of man, upon its union with the body becomes vain and sinful. No sooner does the person exist, but he is a sinner throughout. The early afflictions the souls of infants undergo demonstrate the truth thereof *. Job v. 6, 7; Man is born to affliction as the sparks fly upward. There is no living man without affliction, because there is no man that *liveth and sinneth not*. A persons life, and a persons sinfulness begin together. As natural life grows up into greater vigour, strength, and capacity of action, so does the sin of nature also. The soul of a man is his mind, which upon union with the body immediately became a *carnal mind*, and commenc'd *enmity against God*. So Rom. viii. 7; that from the womb he goes astray.

* *Pelagius* who argued that it was very unjust that the soul, not proceeding from the parents as the body, but newly created of God, should bear the guilt of *Adam's sin*; is answered by the blessed *Austin*, that by the same rule it must be equally unjust that the souls of infants should undergo afflictions. *Pighius* who grants unto all infants who die in the worst condition he can suppose, a sort of an earthly paradise, where they are *de sorte sua bene contenti*, making great use of the same argument with *Pelagius* against original sin, is excellently answered by *Zanchius*, Tom. 4. Lib. 1. de peccato originali.

De Peccato.

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The understanding darkened, the judgment corrupted, the will with rebellion filled, the affections depraved, and in an exceeding sinful manner fixed on things earthly, base and vile; in short, unto them that are defiled and unbelieving there is *nothing pure*, but even

Tit. i. 15. their *mind and conscience* awfully and universally defiled.

From original sin imputed, and inherent, multitudes of actual transgressions

Matt. xv. 19, 20. proceed. For *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies*; which things still encrease man's

Gen. vi. 5. defilement. A defiled heart is the spring and fountain of evil thoughts; and evil thoughts still more and more defile the heart. It is impossible to express the astonishing, yet growing misery of man:

Gen. vi. 5. Every *imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually*. His whole soul is like a corrupt fountain, sending forth and sucking in its bitter waters. The current does not confine it self to one channel, nor does it move with a like violence in all persons. In some the stream of corruption seemeth to move with gentleness; in others it presseth forwards with dreadful eagerness and rapidity. Different constitutions, temptations, opportunities, and obstructions, under the sovereign limitations, fixed

fixed by divine providence must therein be observed. But however various and different those streams of corruption seem to be, they all agree in this, that *unto the place from whence the rivers* Eccles. i. 7: *come, thither they return again.* Tho' they appear in ten thousand shapes, from polluted selfish principles they all proceed, and therein they terminate. Indeed looking upon the world of wickedness among the children of men, nothing seemingly can be found but the greatest confusion and discord; *they* Tit. iii. 3. *are hateful, and hating one another:* nevertheless in a principle of enmity against God, all their corruptions agree. *They* Job xxi. 14. *say unto God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* They hate God, and 'tis in the very nature of hatred to wish the object hated at the greatest distance; and greater distance from being there cannot be than not being: hence it is *the fool* Ps. xiv. 1. *says in his heart, there is no God.* That many unconverted men walk morally, speak well of God and of Christ may seem wonderful; but when we consider that the God set up in their imaginations is not the true God; when we consider that the Christ they profess so much love to, is not the *Messiah* of God, but one they have framed to suit with their own selfish inclinations;

tions; when we consider that their obedience is not in the least the obedience of faith, then the wonder ceases. Under the conduct of a selfish principle, their corruptions run in a different channel from the profane part of the world, nevertheless they agree with all the rest in real enmity against the eternal God. Let the children of men flatter themselves how they will until they have a new nature, they are nothing in themselves by nature but chil-

Eph. ii. 3. dren of wrath. *There is none righteous, no not one, there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after*

Rom. iii. 10—17. *God. There is no fear of God before their eyes.* This is the judgment of

God concerning all the children of men, before they are indeed born of the spirit. And tho' persons may cavil and raise objections now, yet sooner or later *every mouth shall be stopped*, and every person shall appear thus guilty before God.

Repeated and multiplied transgressions, from their very nature, and an awful judgment of God generally attending them, add *strength unto the vicious principle*, and make way for greater iniquities.

^{2 Tim. iii. 13.} Every step the wretched sinner takes is sinful, and every sinful step fixes the soul more and more in the ways of sin and misery. So that it

it seems as possible that the Leopard
should change his spots, or the Black-
moor his skin, as for him to learn to
do good who is accustomed to do evil.

All sin naturally hardens, and inclines Rom.i.21,
22, 23. to more ; but boldness in sinning always hurries the soul on into greater and more dreadful degrees of hardness, and into more awful instances of open transgression. All persons in the world are surrounded with innumerable evils, and attended more or less with aggravated crimes : so that whosoever applies his heart to the knowledge of himself, and to know the wickedness of his own folly, even of his foolishness and madness, must acknowledge with the wisest of men engaged in the same search, that his sin by nature and practice is exceeding deep, who can find it out ?

Eccles. vii.
24, 25.

Satan, the grand enemy of God, and of all goodness has an awful hand over the miserable sons and daughters of men in their natural state and condition. He is said to be the God 2Cor.iv.4. of this world, who blindeth the eyes of them which believe not ; and he is the Eph. ii. 2. prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. He is represented as a strong tyrant in armour keeping his Luk.xi.21. palace, and as a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour ;

he is set forth as a subtil *serpent*, and a cunning hunter, to whom depths, devices, nets and snares do belong, wherein poor wretched sinners are said to be

2 Tim. ii. 26. taken *captive by him at his will*. And to make their condition more and more miserable, they yield themselves to be
Pro. v. 22. bound with the cords of their own sins.

The eternal God, before whom a poor sinner stands, and must stand to
Heb. xii. 29. receive judgment, is a *consuming fire*.
Hab. i. 13. He is of *purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity*. He does not only hate sin, because he will hate it, for then it would have been *possible* for him not to have hated it, but his very nature is contrary to it, he does
Jer. xliv. 4. necessarily hate it. It is that *abominable* thing which his soul hateth. He can as well cease to be, as cease to hate iniquity. Then, sin being supposed, not only divine revelation, but the very nature of God maketh it necessary that sin should be punished. God

Exod. xxxiv. 7. will by no means clear the guilty. The scriptures inform us, that the very heathen had some knowledge of this *judgment of God*; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. As
Rom. iii. 5. God is righteous in taking vengeance upon transgressors, so he will appear a just God in saving them, whom he hath

hath reserved. Whenever and where- Isa. xlv. 21.
ever salvation appears, *righteousness and Psal. lxxxv.*
peace must kiss each other, mercy and^{10.}
truth must meet together. God must be
just in justifying, or he will never ju- Rom. iii.
stifie, sin must be punished, justice must^{26.}
be satisfied, or the sinner can never be
saved. *It is a righteous thing with God* 2 Thes. i. 6.
to recompence tribulation to all the
wicked, and until satisfaction be made,
the strokes of vindictive justice will al-
ways fall upon the sinner.

Poor fallen sinful man can by no
means make satisfaction for sin and
iniquity, *No man can redeem his bro-* Psal. xlix. 7.
ther, nor give unto God a ransom for
him; yea, no man can keep alive his Psal. xxii. 29.
own soul. It is impossible that a finite
creature, all mere creatures necessarily
must be such, should satisfie infinite
justice offended. It is impossible that
any of the fallen sons of Adam should
do any thing towards it; for in their
fallen state they *can do nothing* that is Joh. xv. 5.
good; they are utterly *insufficient for* Rom. vii.
a good thought. Yea, could man now^{18.}
yield even perfect obedience for the 2 Cor. iii. 5.
time to come, it is impossible that
should make amends for past iniquity,
because all obedience is already owing Luk. xvii.
unto God. But as the case stands, man^{10.}
is not only weak but wicked. As he
cannot, so he *will not* do any thing Joh. v. 40.

towards repairing the glory of God.

Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be.* Supposing the good angels had the greatest compassion on miserable man, yet neither one nor all of them could satisfie the justice of God for his ini-
quity; for they are but creatures themselves, and not partakers of the same nature with us. And before God

Ila. xl. 16. *Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering.* Notwithstanding all this misery, and more than can be expres'd, thousands there are every where to be seen, who will not see themselves, but under the dominion of carnal security with hellish confidence, and awful stu-

Rom. ii. 5. *Treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* But, it is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Christ's coming into the world is not to be understood as if it was a possible thing for the eternal godhead, strictly speaking, to move from one place into another. *Do not I fill heavens and earth, saith the Lord?* nor is it to be understood as if the humane body of Christ actually existed before the

Jer. xxiii. 24.

the world, and passed thro' the body of the virgin into the world, as some *vain men* fondly dream, for the Lord plainly tells us, that his body should be a *new thing created in the earth*; ac-
cording to God's word, according to ^{22.} Jer. xxxi.
God's oath, his body must be made of the *fruit of David's loyns*. He ^{Act. ii. 30.} must be *made of a woman*, that is, of the virgin his mother, *according to the Gal. iv. 4. flesh*. And he that is not such a one, is not the promised *Messiah*; is not the favour of sinners; for the *mighty one*, ^{Psal. lxxxix.} on whom their *help was laid*, was to ^{19.} be one *from among the people*. Indeed, figuratively, the loco-motive phrase of coming may be applied unto the eternal God. Having adopted us, in dispensations, manifestations, and operations of paternal love, the father comes to ^{Joh. xiv. 23.} us, and enables us by the spirit of adoption, in filial obedience, love and duty to come to him. So God in the person of the spirit according to promise comes to us, as he is our comforter; ^{Joh. xvi. 8.} and God in the person of the son, may very well be said to come to us as mediator. For, as mediator he was *set* ^{Pro. viii. 23.} *up* in the everlasting counsels and covenant of God, and as mediator (great is the mystery) God was manifested in ^{1 Tim. iii.} the flesh. *The word was made flesh*, ^{16.} *and dwelt among us*. He became what ^{Joh. i. 14.} he

he was not, yet did not cease to be what he was. Still the eternal God, tho' now the seed of the woman. His præ-existence in another nature than the human, is indeed in the expression very manifest, because where-ever we read of his coming, or of his coming into the world, we read also of some special design he came upon. The old testament saints lived in the faith of his coming, greatly desired to see the days of the son of man, died in the faith, not having

Heb. xi. 39. received the promise.

Hagg. ii. 7. *Haggai* indeed said, that the *desire of all nations* the Messiah should come into the temple then in building, commonly called the second temple, and fill that house with his glory. A thing impossible for any person to do, expected by the *Jews* in any age since the destruction of that temple by the *Romans*.

Mal. iii. 1. *Malachi* said, that the *angel of the covenant should suddenly come into his temple*. In due time unto *Simeon* it was revealed, that he should not dye until he had seen the Lord's Christ, and accordingly we find him in the temple with the wonderful babe in his arms, rejoyn-

Luk. ii. 29, *Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* So he came unto his own.

The great and gracious design he came upon was to save poor sinners.

The son of man came to save that which was lost. Luk. xix.^{10.} He came to save them out of a state of misery ; he came to save them into a state of happiness.

i. Their misery was such, that they seem'd to be as a *prey between the teeth of the mighty* ; for, nothing can be more manifest than that the children of men by nature, whatever good thoughts they may have of themselves, are under the *power* of satan. But the *son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.* Act. xxvi.^{18.} *He came to deliver his people from the power of darkness, and from the hands of all their enemies.* Christ came to divide the spoil with the *strong, and take unto him all his own.* Heb. ii.^{14.} How far soever satan may be said to have the power of death, Christ came to destroy that power on the behalf of all his people. Christ came to *bruise the serpent's head, the very seat of poison, life and craftiness.* The glorious heavenly prince came to lead captivity captive, and to set his enslaved ones at liberty. Although dust shall be the serpent's meat, * yet the

* Significat restrictionem potestatis diaboli, ad homines terrenos glebae addictos, & in rebus hujus terrae bonum ac felicitatem suam quarentes. Witsius de Oecon. Fæder. P. 427.

¹ Pet. v. 8. jewels belonging to the crown of Christ, it may not, it shall not devour.

Christ did not only come to redeem his people out of the hands of the enemy, but to save them from themselves. His name was called Jesus, Matt. i. 21. because he should save his people *from their sins*. He came to redeem them from all iniquity. Which expression comprehends deliverance from condemnation for sin, deliverance from the dominion of sin, and in the Lord's own time, deliverance from the very being of sin. He loved the church, and gave himself for it, *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

It plainly follows, yea, it is evidently express'd that he came to save them from *the wrath to come*. By wrath is meant the strokes of divine justice taking vengeance for iniquity. As upon the supposition of sin, obligation to punishment from the very nature of infinite justice necessarily follows; so upon satisfaction made, impending wrath is for ever laid aside Eph. v. 2. for the same reason. Christ gave himself

self for his people an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling favour.

2. Christ came to save his people into a state of happiness. As he came to deliver their souls from death, so he came *that they might have life, and Joh. x. 10. that they might have it more abundantly.*

1. He came that they might have life. As death under the condemnation of the law was to be removed by Christ; so a life of compleat justification in the sight of God, was by him to be obtained for all his people. *He is Rom. x. 4. the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* The mediator ^{Rom. iii.} was fore-ordained and sent to be a ^{25, 26.} propitiation, that the eternal God might be just in justifying poor sinners that have no righteousness of their own.

He was delivered for our offences, and Rom. iv. was raised again for our justification. ^{25.}

Regeneration, being a new creation of heavenly life within them, is also comprehended in the grand design of our Lord's coming into the world. Without this great privilege, so much mistaken by some, and derided by others, no person can partake of real happiness.

The word of God makes this very ^{Joh. iii. 3, 4.} manifest, and the very nature of the thing makes it necessary, and the errand Christ

Christ came upon into the world makes
Joh. vi. 37. it certain unto all the chosen. *All that
 the father giveth me, shall come unto me.*
 And, being converted, in a state of re-
 generation, they shall be kept, Christ
 will hold their souls in life for ever.

Joh. x. 28. He giveth unto them *eternal life, and
 they shall never perish, nor shall any pluck
 them out of his hands.* The unchange-
 ableness of God's nature, the immuta-
 bility of his counsel, the inhabitation of
 his spirit, the faithfulness of his pro-
 mises, together with the impossibility of
 frustrating the almighty redeemer in his
 designs, support, and guard this truth
 for ever, against the temptations of sa-
 tan, the corruptions of believers, and
 the cavils of the ungodly.

Rom. v. 18. 2. He came that they might have it
 more abundantly. The life of justifi-
 cation, or *justification of life*, which is
 now compleat upon all, tho' often clouded
 in some of God's dear children, shall
 with abundant evidence shine upon and
 unto all the justified. Regeneration
 which is now real in all believers, and
 shall not be repeated, according to the
 design of Christ, shall appear in greater
Zech. xii. 8. beauty, vigour, and strength. *The
 weak shall be as David.* All the re-
Rom. v. 17. deemed shall receive *abundance of grace,
 and reign in life* by Jesus Christ. The
 work of God in every believer shall con-
 quer

quer and out-live all indwelling corruption, and shall fill the whole soul with its glory ; and the church of Christ, tho' comparatively a feeble flock, shall conquer and out-live all worldly opposition, and shall be made and established a praise in the earth. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands, shall become it self a mountain filling the whole earth. When Christ, the life, Dan. ii. 44. of the church shall appear, then shall all the church *appear with him in Col. iii. 3. glory.*

It is impossible to express the whole of his work, yet, as great as it was, it is said of him, that he should *not fail* Isa. xlvi. 4: *nor be discouraged*, which leads us to consider his fitness and sufficiency for such a mighty undertaking.

His ability to save must in the first place be laid in his eternal power and godhead. *Their redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name.* Their redeemer is the holy one of *Israel*, the God of the whole earth shall he be called. The mighty God, God over all, blessed for ever, the great God and our saviour, the true God and the everlasting life, the only Lord God, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the almighty, &c. are expressions whereby he is known in sacred scriptures. *Jehovah*, that sacred name, judged ineffable by a generation who rejected

Isa. liv. 5.
Isa. ix. 6.
Rom. ix. 5.
Tit. ii. 13.
1 Joh. v. 20.
Jude 4.
Rev. i. 8.

Psal. lxxxiii. 18. rejected the *prince of life*, is often in scripture applied to our redeemer, tho' never in any sense to a mere creature. Efficiency proper and peculiar to the eternal godhead is given unto him.

Joh. i. 3. *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Whatever person was made, whatever glory had a beginning, the son of God our redeemer, made such a person, and gave a beginning to such a glory; which is an evident demonstration, so far as scripture revelation will be allowed to be such, of his eternal godhead; for, he must be before all created beings. And as he made all things, so he effectually governs all;

Col. i. 17. *for, by him all things consist.* Is it peculiar to the eternal God to be omnisci-

Joh. xxi. 17. ent? to be omnipotent? to be omni-

Joh. iii. 13. present? are these and such like in-communicable properties of the divine

Rev. i. 8. nature? they are so, and, yet all attributed to Jesus Christ in the scriptures. The practise of the saints, and the precepts of God make it manifest, that Jesus Christ is to be trusted in, and worshipped with divine worship; but

Jer. xvii. 5. *cursed is that man that trusteth in man,* tho' never so exalted, *and maketh flesh*

Matt. iv. 10. *his arm.* Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Let the devil and all his servants do what

what they can to cloud or confute this truth, let them use all the dark devices hell can invent, and corrupt nature improve; let them have all the advantages they are capable of being furnished with; yet the eternal godhead of Christ will shine unto all the godly, with great and prevailing evidence in the holy scriptures.

And indeed the saviour of sinners must be so great a person, for, by him infinite justice must be satisfied, the powers of hell must be conquered, and the dead sinner raised to and preserved in life. Infinite justice being offended, he must be an infinite person that makes satisfaction. Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, Phil.ii.6,7, thought it no robbery to be equal with 8. God; therefore humbled himself unto death that his people might live. The person in whom alone the eternal God could be well pleased, must be his own Matt.iii.17 beloved son. We should not have had a righteousness fit to appear in now before the righteous Jehovah, had not Jer. xxxiii. Jehovah been our righteousness. Our 6. redeemer being the eternal God, can also conquer the devil, destroy his works, and cause poor creatures who are dead in trespasses and sins, to hear his voice and live. All that belong unto the mystical body of Christ, shall

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actually

actually and effectually be brought to partake of the privileges thereof in conversion, because Christ Jesus, who Jer. xxxiii. 16. by his word and spirit calleth them is Jehovah our righteousness *.

Heb. ii. 14. Again, Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also took 1 Cor. xv. 21. part of the same. For since by man came death, by man must also the resurrection come. The mediator between God and man, must himself be really man, or he could not die for sinful men, yet man in personal union with the eternal son of God, otherwise his death would have fallen short of satisfying divine justice. The mediator, as he was the eternal God, could not die, could not suffer, he assumed therefore, not a humane person, but humane nature into personal union with himself, that in that nature, God might pursue the church with his own blood.

Act. xx. 28. It is indeed wonderful, yet necessary, 1 Tim. iii. 16. that the glorious God should be manifest in the flesh, and become so nearly related to his poor people. He did assume humane nature with a peculiar regard to the seed of Abraham, the

* *Is autem qui vocabit eam* (nimis) ad promissam hanc salutem prædicatione evangelii, & perficiet potentia sua erit Jehovah justitia nostra. Jer. xxxiii. 16. Jun. & Tremell.

elect.

elect. Well, did the *right of redemption* Isa. liv. 5. belong to him, because he was near of kin to us? and still to render our compleat redemption secure, he is *sent* to save us to the uttermost.

Upon this our Lord comes cloath'd with the highest authority, and says, *I have power to lay down my life, and Joh. x. 18. have power to take it again; this commandment have I received of my father.* Upon this very account, of his being the mediator sent is the father said to be greater than he. He enjoyed in all fulness whatever was necessary to render him eminently furnished for so great a work. He had love enough to carry him thro' any sufferings for the sake of the elect. No wonder persons in their own carnal wisdom stumble at and oppose the everlasting unchangeable love of Christ, for his love *passeth knowledge.* His compassions never fail. He is every way merciful and faithful, and was in all things made like unto his brethren that he might be so. He is mighty to save, he is able to save to the uttermost. Such a Heb.vii.16. high-priest became us.

Did Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners? then it is evident that he came upon a higher design than to put them in a way to save themselves.

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And,

And, it is as evident that his work did, doth, and shall most certainly answer Joh. xvii. 4. his design. He did not return *re infecta*, his work upon earth for his people he Col. i. 20. compleatly finished. He made *peace by the blood of his cross*. He gave himself 1 Tim. ii. 6. *Aυτινούλεγε*, an adequate price of redemption for us. We have repeated Isa. xliii. 21. assurances that all in God is *well pleased for his righteousness sake, and that the law is magnified and made honourable*. As for the powers of darkness he con- Eph. iv. 8. quer'd them, and led *captivity captive* in a triumphant manner when he ascended on high. In heaven he maketh intercession for us, and is always heard. Upon his mediation the Holy Spirit the comforter comes; converts and sanctifies all those for whom Christ died, in the very time of love; leads them to and strengthens them for their duties, comforts them under their difficulties, giveth unto them to wait for the second Joh. xiv. 16, 17. coming of their Lord, and in order to hold their souls in life, to subdue every thing sinful, to encourage and strengthen every thing heavenly in them, according to promise, he *dwelleteth* with them for ever. And by the way, tho' they are in the midst of trials, he putteth a Rom. viii. 33, 34. new song in their mouth, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth: who is he that*

*that condemneth? it is Christ that died,
yea, rather is risen again, who also maketh intercession for us.*

From the consideration of Christ's design, in coming to save sinners, we are led to understand that salvation is a concern of unspeakable weight. Indeed the children of men, who know not the things that belong unto their peace, make light of it; but in the wisdom of God the salvation of poor sinners has been look'd upon as an affair of the greatest moment, as appears from *numberless thoughts* in the contri-
Psal. xl. 5.
vance, and every way amazing methods in the performance thereof; which without doubt among the godly under the effectual operations of the Holy Spirit, shall be found influential to faith, holiness, and thankfulness.

The doctrine it self has also a special tendency to lead poor unconverted sinners to consider their misery, to look unto Jesus in whom alone is salvation, and to venture their poor souls for time and eternity upon him. All in Christ encourages them, all in the gospel directs them, all in the law commands them so to do.
Rom. ii. 5.

Prop. II. Some of the chief or the greatest of sinners have been, are, and shall be saved by Christ Jesus.

This proposition does not lie so full in the words as the former, yet it has a very firm foundation there; it was the apostle's judgment in the text that the *chief* of sinners was saved. We have no reason to be of a different mind concerning God's power, grace, and salvation. Yea, in ver. 16. he tells us, that his conversion was a *pattern* of other conversions to follow. So we proceed.

Persons become great and greater sinners by the perpetration of some evil peculiarly *great* in it self. Joseph apprehended the evil he was tempted to in Egypt to be of that sort; *how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* to despise and turn from God himself as the refreshing, satisfying fountain of living waters, is judged to be such an evil, that the whole creation should be *astonished* at. Carnal hatred is *murder* in God's esteem; and covetousness, however wink'd at, cloathed and covered among men, is no less *Col. iii. 5.* than *worshipping a strange God.*

Also,

Also, the *frames* of men's spirits in sinning, distinguish their crimes and guilt. There are some who sin pre- Phil. iii. 19. sumptuously, with an high hand, and publickly glory in their shame; there 2Cor. xi. 3. are others who gradually under enticements and allurements are ensnared. The more of the will is in any sin, Heb. iii. 12. the greater that sin is to be accoun- 13. ted.

Again, multiplied, repeated acts of transgression, of whatever name or nature the transgressions may be, donominate persons by so much the greater sinners. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, Gen. vi. 5. and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Moreover, the greater that *knowledge* is a man sins with, or sinneth *against*, the greater is his crime. *Paul* judged himself the greatest of sinners, yet he saw he might have been greater still, had not God ordered it otherwise. Therefore, he says, it was a *mercy*, that 1Tim.i.13. what he did was done in ignorance and unbelief. That servant which knew his Lord's will, and did it not, Luk.xii.47. was the greatest sinner. Yea, the sins of the heathen became great in that they *imprison'd* the truth, Rom.i.18. which

which they knew, in unrighteousness.

I must add, the greater the *mercy and goodness* any person sinneth against, he is by so much the greater transgressor. There is mention made of them who Rom. ii. 4. *despised the riches of God's goodness*, and so treasur'd up unto themselves wrath. To eat of his bread, and lift up the heel against him, must aggravate the guilt.

Hag. i. 7.
Jer. ii. 2. That a person may therefore in some good measure understand his sinfulness; his own nature, and his practice must be before him; the holy, just, and good law of God must be in view; the holy and infinite majesty so far as possible contemplated, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the repetition of sinful acts, how against knowledge in a man's self, and mercy in God, time, place, manner, measure, company, consequences, with other circumstances must be consider'd; and in all the greatest faithfulness to God, and a man's own soul must be used.

But how if upon the whole, the person finds himself to be, at least in his own judgment, the greatest sinner, the vilest transgressor in the whole world? unto such a person the proposition before us, that some of the greatest

test of sinners have been, are, and shall be saved by Christ Jesus, may in the hands of the Holy Spirit be of great use. The truth thereof, and the wisdom of the grace of God expressed therein, we shall briefly consider.

The many gracious *encouragements* which the eternal God giveth in his word to the greatest of sinners to turn to him, and to expect forgiveness from him seem to support the truth of what is asserted, with great evidence. Even, under the old testament, when as yet the *exceeding riches of his grace* were Eph. ii. 7. not so fully laid open, we find abundant encouragement unto the unwor-
thiest. Unto a people laden with ini-
quity does he graciously say, *Come now* Isa. i. 18. *let us reason together, saith the Lord,*
tho' your sins be as scarlet, they shall be
as white as snow; tho' they be red like
crimson, they shall be as wooll. Unto a
people who had spoken and done evil
things as they could, does he, as filled
with paternal compassions and bowels,
say, *return unto me, oh backsliding chil-* Jer. iii. 14.
dren. Does he thus call? does he thus
invite the vilest and the worst? shall
his words be for ever lost? or shall
they *return unto him void?* blessed be Isa. lv. 11.
the God of all grace and truth, we
are assured that according to his word
it

Isa. xxvii. 13. it shall come to pass. *They shall come who are ready to perish.*

We have not only the invitations, but the *operations* of mighty grace to consider as invincible demonstrations of the present truth. We need not stand here to consider the many aggravating circumstances which attended the first transgression of our father *Adam*; yet the eternal God sought him out, found him, gave him faith, and saved him. *Manasseh* has often been mentioned by many as an instance of amazing grace. How awful is the account of his transgression! and how wonderful is that of the mercy he obtained! did the Lord raise up *Hezekiah* his servant, and fill him with integrity and zeal, for the beginning, the promoting, and almost perfecting a desirable reformation in *Israel*? his son, *Manasseh*, who could no less than know better things, knock'd all that reformation in the head, and plung'd *Israel* in deeper transgressions than ever. I think it is impossible for any person, who has but the least grain of tenderness of conscience, to read the story of his crimes without trembling; and yet God was pleased to recover, pardon, and save such a wretched sinner as he was; the account whereof stands in the book of God, for special instruction to poor sinners.

2 Chron. xxxiii. 1-13

I am

I am greatly mistaken if the history of *Solomon* does not furnish us still with a greater instance. It must certainly be granted, as was before hinted, that persons aggravate their crimes to a prodigious degree by sinning against improved knowledge. Wisdom and knowledge to an unparallel'd degree, *Solomon* by the favour of God was partaker of. No person in the world could compare with him for capacity, ability, and opportunity of doing good. The building of the temple of the Lord, a work which *David* could not be honour'd with, fell upon *Solomon*, which he with faithfulness performed. But who would have thought that the same man would ever have built after them high places and temples for the abominations of the heathen? his heart was turned in an awful measure from the Lord God, who had so eminently gifted him, so highly honour'd him, and so often graciously appear'd to him. Nevertheless, tho' his sin abounded, the grace of God abounded much more. The Lord healed his backslidings, restored him in his soul, made him again a pen man of one eminent part of holy scripture, wherein he bewails his own folly, mourns over the unfathomable depth of his own corruption, and carries himself every way

Eccles.i. 1.

as

¹ King. xi.
6,7,8,9,10.

Prov. xxx. as the preacher, or one gathered to
1, 2. the church, as the word imports.

If we descend to the personal ministry of our Lord upon earth, and consider what sort of persons they were, who found mercy at his hands, we shall find the truth of what we have asserted still further confirmed. The self-righteous *Pharisees* were indeed awfully left unto their own blindness

Matt. xxi. and unbelief, and *publicans and harlots entred into the kingdom of heaven* before them.

A poor sinful woman, despised by *Simon the Pharisee* for the greatness of her sins, received Christ by faith, and loved him much, her sins that were many being forgiven her.

Luk. vii. 47. Generally all other instances of conversion by Christ's personal ministry are much of the same nature with this. His first sermons were preach'd on the sea-coast, among sea-faring men, who are generally the most stupid, vile, and vain of all persons, therefore upon

Matt. iv. 16. that account it is said, that *the people who sat in darkness saw great light.*

Poor fishermen followed him, and were eminent instances of grace in themselves, and powerful preachers thereof to others. *Zaccheus* the publican gladly

Luk. xix. 6. received the redeemer. *Matthew* the publican proclaim'd the glory of his grace to all the world, and the poor vile

vile woman of *Samaria* was made not only happy in the enjoyment of salvation her self, but honour'd as his messenger to other poor sinners in her neighbourhood. And, to bring about such a work at *Samaria*, it is said, our Lord must needs go that way. As he came upon the design of saving the chief of sinners, so according to his counsel and design it is necessary they should be saved; and there is a necessity that this truth should for ever shine.

Again, this truth appears with clearness in the *commission* our Lord gave unto his disciples. *Go unto all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature.* ^{Mark. xvi. 15.} That is, to all sorts of sinners among the *Jews* or *Gentiles*. Tho' some of them might be so *brutifly* sinful, that they did not deserve the name of rational creatures, yet preach the gospel to every creature. Indeed, irrational beings, the devils, the damned, those who had blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, on whom judgment was already passed, were not intended by our Lord. But, now the commission is general and indefinite. There is no *sort* of sinners excluded, the glad tidings of salvation must be preach'd to them, not to mock them, but to save them. The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall ^{Isa. xxvii. 13.} come who are ready to perish. They ^{Luk. xxiv. 47.} were

were to begin at *Jerusalem*, among the persons who cried out, *Crucifie him, crucifie him*, his blood be upon us and our children, and wonderful success follow-

Act. ii. 41. ed. Thousands of them were immediately converted. May the sheet, let down in vision for the apostle *Peter's* instruction and encouragement to preach

Act. x. 12. the gospel to the poor *Gentiles*, be for ever comfortably remembred. In it

were *all manner* of creeping things. There is no sinner in the whole universe, but may see an unclean thing like himself in that sheet. So *Peter* was instructed to preach the gospel to all sorts

of sinners, none left out. Did our Lord give such a commission to his disciples? we are certain that he was serious in

Ita. iv. 11. sending his word, and as certain that it shall not return unto him void.

The truth before us will farther appear in that *testimony* which the Lord did bear to the word of his grace in the

1Cor. i. 26, ministry of the apostles. *For you see your*
27, 28. *calling, brethren, base things of the world,*

and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are. Corinth

it self was a place noted for all wickedness, and it seems the vilest and most base in the town were called by grace. Some of the converted ones at *Corinth* had been such persons for sin and iniquity,

quity, that they seem'd to be nothing else throughout but iniquity it self. Such were some of you. *Tauræ*, such ^{1 Cor. vi.} heaps of iniquity. How mightily did ^{11.} the grace of God prevail at *Ephesus*, the city where *Diana* was worshipped! where the people were not only dark, but as *darkness* it self! at *Antioch* we ^{Eph. v. 8.} find a person who had been brought up with *Herod the Tetrarch*, sent forth to ^{A&T. xiii. 1.} preach the gospel of Christ; and in *Cæsar Nero's* family, who was one of the vilest of all the *Cæsar's*, we find dear ^{Phil. iv. 22.} and very affectionate saints.

More considerations might be added, but brevity being designed, what is mentioned may be thought sufficient to demonstrate that it is a *true saying*, that Christ came into the world to save the *chief* of sinners, and that accordingly such sinners have been, are, and shall be saved by him.

The wisdom of God in such a dispensation of his grace must in the next place be briefly consider'd.

We may then observe that the all-wise God does bring poor vain man thus to see his own *insufficiency* to convert and save himself. Persons are naturally inclin'd to glory in their wisdom, and in their strength, but the word of the gospel, and the works of the spirit hide pride from man. *By the law of faith* ^{Rom. iii.} *boasting* ^{27.}

boasting is excluded. Vain man would
Job xi. 12. be esteemed wise ; but the Lord chooses
1 Cor. i. 27. the foolish things of the world to con-
 found the wise, and weak things of the
 world to confound the mighty. To
 make it manifest that man's conversion
 is not of himself, he converteth those
Isa. xlvi. 12. persons who seem to be farthest off from
righteousness, and passes by those persons
 who glory in their morality and virtue.
 Let moral virtues in unconverted per-
 sons arise never so high, they cannot a-
 rise higher than their fountain. As they
 spring from self, so they circulate and
 terminate therein. But the grace of
 conversion proceeds from a higher
 spring, is of a higher nature, aims at,
 and shall attain to a higher end. And
 this, God makes evident unto his peo-
 ple, as by several and various ways and
 means, so in particular by working sa-
 vingly upon the greatest and vilest of sin-
 ners. Humane prudence and wisdom
 cannot share in the glory of conversion,
 because, generally speaking, it is a thing
Matt. xi. 25. hid from *the wise and prudent*. God re-
 solves to make it manifest, that man is
 so far from having a power to con-
 vert himself, that he has indeed no power
 to dispose himself, or make himself any-
 way fit for conversion. What men may
 call dispositions for conversion God
 passes by and rejects. It is not his or-
 dinary

dinary way to take up his abode in those souls that fancy themselves swept and garnished, and prepared to receive and entertain him. He comes to the vilest and vaineſt often in the dispensati-
ons of his grace, to make it evident that it is not of him that runneth, nor of him <sup>Rom. ix.
16.</sup> that willeth.

2. This method of God in saving the vileſt of sinners does not only discover the insufficiency of man, but the *all-suffi-
ciency* of grace. In making the exceed-
ing riches of his grace manifest towards us, God has abounded ^{Eph. i. 7, 8.} in *all wisdom and prudence*. He was resolved to shew unto man his own misery and his mercy. The misery of man is such, that he is not only insufficient for a good thought towards saving himself, but by nature an utter *enemy* to his own salvation. In <sup>Prov. viii.
36.</sup> saving such poor miserable wretches, God manifesteth his grace to be every way free, to be every way full. Grace appears infinitely free in that poor sin-
ners are made partakers of it, who de-
served it not, who desired it not. That they partake thereof who in no wise *de-
served* it is very evident. *Thou hast not* <sup>Isa. xliv. 22
called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast — 25.</sup> *been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast
not brought me the small cattle of thy
burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honour-
ed me with thy sacrifices; I have not*

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caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices, but thou hast made me to save with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Amazing, undeserved grace altogether!

Also in reaching the worst of sinners, grace appears every way grace, in that poor creatures partake of it, who did not so much as *desire* it. A person might think that what is given upon a humble petition is altogether gracious; but here all petitions are prevented. Grace reaches them who are dead in sins and trespasses, and, in death there are no desires. Upon this God says, *I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

*Ifa. xxxv.
10.*

That the grace of God is every way *full* in saving the greatest of sinners, is plain in that by grace they are saved from *all sorts* of misery. From sin, from satan, from his servants, from themselves, and from all *sorrow and sighing* they are and shall be saved. The grace of God removes all that can make poor sinners miserable,

miserable, and introduces all that can make them happy.

All things that pertain unto life and godliness are freely and fully given. ^{2 Pet. i. 3.} Grace is so full that it brings along with it justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance in a state of grace, and in the end, everlasting glory. Whatever may belong unto all, or either of the mentioned privileges, grace provides and secures. *God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickned us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved, and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.* ^{Eph. ii. 4, 5.} ^{6, 7,}

3. Thus God is exalted, and the sinner humbled, the eternal God in his three persons is in a particular manner glorified, in contriving, in procuring, and in applying this exceeding great salvation: *It shall be to him for a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth.* The Lord alone is and shall be hereby exalted, and the *haughtiness* of man made low. That ^{Jer. xxxiii. 9.} *Paul* look'd upon himself the chief of sinners is very evident; how thereupon he was cloath'd with humility is as evident from the whole history of his

Eph. iii. 8. life and experience after conversion ; he judged himself *less than the least of all the saints*. It must be acknowledged that proud professors understand but little of this mystery ; but happy are those **Phil. ii. 3.** poor souls who in a right spirit *esteem others better than themselves*. Those who are little children in their own esteem, and are willing to be such in the esteem of others, according to the **Matt. xviii. 4.** judgment of Christ himself, are the *greatest in the kingdom of heaven*. Unto this true greatness, great grace brings us.

4. Thus God draws forth the *love* of poor sinners greatly to himself. When they had no love in them, nor loveliness upon them, God loved them ; and now, being converted, they love him, **1 Joh. iv. 19.** *because he loved them first*. It is impossible to express all the ways and means God maketh use of to endear himself to his children ; this only at present falls under our observation, that Christ Jesus in saving the chief of sinners draws forth their love in a wonderful manner to himself. It is very true that Jesus Christ is in himself, an object every way worthy of our greatest love and **Can. v. 16.** light above any consideration of benefit received by him : so the father always loved him, and ever will. But **Prov. viii. 30.** he is pleas'd to overcome the hearts of his

his poor people, and lead them forth to love him above all things, not only from the consideration of his own loveliness and glory, but from views of his love to them, together with all the precious and valuable fruits thereof. *He Gal. ii. 20. loved them, and gave himself for them.* He loved them, and *washed Rev. i. 5.* their sins in his own blood. And when they are led by faith to see this, they love him for this mighty salvation, and love him for himself: and the greater sinners they really judge themselves to be, the more they will love Christ the redeemer, who loved them so freely, and saved them so wonderfully. We read of a poor woman, who shewed abundance of love to Jesus Christ, *stood at Luk.vii.38. his feet, behind him weeping, washed his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with precious ointment.* Our Lord Jesus acquaints us with the true reason of so much love, *verse 47.* she had been a great sinner, and now grace had reached her; she loved much, because her sins which were many, were forgiven. I need not here stand to observe that fervent love to Christ will constrain to all duty. Where Christ is *2Cor.v.14.* truly loved, his commandments will be impartially observed. We read of *Joh.xiv.21.* the work of faith, the patience of hope, *1Theff.i.3.*

Rom. xiii.
10. and the labour of love. Love will be laborious, he that loveth fulfilleth the law.

Ifa. iv. 8. Does Christ Jesus often save the chieftest of sinners? from thence it is very evident that his thoughts are not like our thoughts, nor his ways like our ways. Men according to the thoughts they naturally have of persons and things, judge the greatest sinners to be in the most desperate condition. The *Pharisee*

Luk. xviii.
11. of old thanked God that he was *not like other men*, particularly, he judged himself in a far better case, than a poor

Verse 13. *Publican* standing by. The *Publican* smote upon his breast, bewail'd his wretched circumstances, yet went to his house justified rather than the other. The moral *Pharisees* were far from thinking that *Publicans and Harlots* should enter into the kingdom of heaven before them: nevertheless it was to be so, according to the dispensations and determinations of wise grace. But the *natural man* judgeth the things of God to be *foolishness*.

1Cor. ii. 14.

Ifa. iv. 7. Does Christ Jesus often save the chief of sinners? then let the wicked forsake his way, and the ungodly man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly

dantly pardon. Let him forsake his way, for it leads to the chambers of death and eternal destruction. Christ came to save sinners, even the chietest of sinners from their sins, and not to give them leave to live in sin that grace might abound. To infer that persons may go on in sin, because Christ came to save 'em from their sins, is not only contrary to religion but all appearance of reason. What has been said concerning the gracious work of Christ, in saving the greatest of sinners, tends only to honour Christ as the almighty saviour, and to encourage such who groan under the insupportable weight of guilt and transgression to forsake their sins, and venture themselves for ever upon him. All the children of God in the world shall sooner or later be helped to make good use of this truth; tho' at present contradicted by many, and despised by more.

To conclude, seeing that Christ Jesus often saveth the chieftest of sinners, let his saved ones every way give him all the praise of his salvation. We never read of any being saved because they were little sinners: the wages of the Rom. vi. least sin is everlasting death; therefore ^{23.} eternal life is the free gift of God unto all those who are made partakers

Rom. iii. thereof. Carnal boasting is excluded,
27. 1 Cor. xv. 10. for we are saved by grace, And perhaps he will appear the happiest person, who thinks himself of all men most indebted unto grace ; for he is in
Ps. xxix. 2. the way to give unto Christ the *glory of his name*. Persons give unto Christ the glory of his salvation by faith and works, by evangelical principles, and a conversation agreeable thereunto. It is said
Rom. iv. 20. of *Abraham*, that he was *strong in faith, and gave glory to God*; and our Lord tells us, that our light should so
Matt. v. 16. *shine before men*, that they may see our
Joh. xv. 5. good works, and *glorifie God*. By bringing forth much fruit in Christ, we glorifie him. To bring forth much fruit is to abound in all good works; and to bring forth much fruit in Christ, is to do all in faith. They can never be call'd good works which flow from selfish principles to selfish ends, nor can that be call'd true faith, which is destitute of good works and a holy con-
Rom. i. 5. versation. By faith, and the *obedience*
Tit. ii. 11. 12. *of faith* we glorifie our saviour : for the *grace of God that bringeth salvation, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*. Sobriety contains all moderation towards our selves, in eating and drinking, and wearing of apparel, and indeed in

in the pursuit and enjoyment of all or any of those outward pleasures and profits, real or imaginary, which may concern our own persons. *Righteousness* comprehends all that which by the royal law of love and equity we owe to others; including all just care and diligence to provide for, and support our own families, all justice in making and fulfilling of contracts with those where we have any dealings, abstaining from all appearance of any word or work, which tends to the real detriment of any person whether concern'd or not concern'd immediately with us; and all tenderness, meekness, and mercy towards all persons in misery. *Godliness* comprehends all that we owe to God, in worshipping him in the closet, in the family, and in the assembly of his saints, in walking with him in faith, fellowship, and evangelical communion, yielding all obedience to his precepts, aiming at a due temper of spirit towards him under all his providential dispensations, in holy expectation and evangelical desires, waiting for the time when *God shall be, all in all.* All God's works shall *praise* him; and thus poor sinners saved by his grace are bound to *bless* him; and the stronger their faith in the compleat salvation of Christ, according to rich and super-abounding

abounding grace, the more they shall
 Ps.ciii.1,2, be engaged in this blessed work. Bless
 3, 4. *the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all
 his benefits, who forgiveth all thine ini-
 quities, who healeth all thy diseases, who
 redeemeth thy life from destruction, and
 crowneth thee with loving kindness and
 tender mercies.*

*Prop. III. It is a possible thing for a
 person to see himself the chief of sinners,
 and at the same time be well assured of
 his standing interest in the salvation of
 Christ.*

Assurance of salvation is a special blessing of the new covenant, which God is pleas'd to give to many of his believing children; all of them in this world partake not thereof alike: as to the time and degree of its enjoyment there is a difference. Yea, it is not always alike with the self-same person: yet still a new covenant-blessing it is, promised and greatly to be desired. In the greatest mercy God gave the word, and in the greatest faithfulness he will fulfil it: *I will be their God, and they shall be my people;* whereby God intends not only what he is to his people mercifully in secret possession, but what they shall cheerfully acknowledge him to be in a believing profession;

Jer. xxxi.
 33.

fession ; *this God is our God for ever aid ever.* This blessing is really understood by believers only, the unconverted are not acquainted with it. All the ungodly are enemies to true assurance. Some of them under a form of profession may put on carnal proud boasting confidence, but that has nothing of gospel assurance in it. On the account of the loose vain conversation of such persons, evangelical assurance has been unjustly reproached. However, carnal confidence and the assurance of faith are not related, they do not grow upon the same root, nor do they bring forth the same fruit ; their taste and favour widely differ, the one tastes of ^{Deut. xxix.} ^{19.} heaven, and the other favours rankly of ^{Gal. v. 19 ---} the flesh, but such as never tasted ^{24.} *that the Lord is gracious* cannot distinguish.

Most part of the unconverted professedly condemn assurance. The profane deride it, and all appearance of religion with it, the rest think it inconsistent with piety, for they know no other religion than that which the fear of hell puts them upon : let that ^{Rom. iii. 8.} be removed, and then they think all manner of persons must unavoidably give themselves up to all licentiousness.

But

But what adds unto our grief is, that many of the children of God themselves, tho' they greatly want assurance, and have a right unto it, yet being too much under the conduct of a spirit

Jon. ii. 8. of bondage, *refuse their own mercies.*

Jam. iv. 5. Their natural *spirit lusteth to envy,* and

Gal. iv. 24. *gendreth to bondage.* What tendency

the preaching any of them sit under hath to imbitter their spirits, to strengthen their bonds, and to darken their souls, shall be made manifest another day. However the blessing it self will be precious to the enjoyers thereof. Indeed assurance of sonship, assurance of heaven should be so esteemed. The nature, the causes, the concomitants, the fruits and effects thereof proclaim it valuable: nor was it ever despised by any, but by those who were strangers to it.

Jud. 10.

It must be granted, that there are many in the world, whose thoughts are but little disturb'd about their eternal condition, who are at the same time utterly unacquainted with gospel assurance.

Jer. xlvi.ii. Many take it for granted that they are in as fair a way for heaven as their

1 Thess. v. 3. neighbours, sit down and take their ease, and think it by far a wiser method than to put themselves upon what they may apprehend to be a tedious and a troublesome search. But the

nature

nature of assurance does not lie in such a temper of spirit. Nor does it lie in a bare conjecture or opinion, grounded upon fallible evidences, leading the person to wander in uncertainties, and unavoidably exposing him to continual hesitations. But, the nature of true assurance, according to that account we have of it in scripture, must lie in a certain persuasion grounded upon an infallible testimony that the soul does thro' grace enjoy a standing interest in the everlasting salvation of God. Thus the apostle, *I am perswaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God.* For ^{Rom. viii. 38, 39.} *we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands,* eternal in the heavens. *We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* ^{1 Joh. iv. 16.} *We know that we have passed from death to life.* ^{1 Joh. iii. 14.} *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.*

In scripture we read of assurance promised to poor sinners, much assurance enjoyed by them, and full assurance

¹*1 Cor. v. 13.*
¹*1 Thess. i. 5.*

Col. ii. 2. rance aimed at and *prayed* for: full
Heb. vi. 11. assurance of understanding, full assur-
Heb. x. 22. rance of hope, and full assurance of
 faith: all which expressions manifest
 the reality of the grace of assurance, the
 variety of degrees in attainment, and
 that the least grain should be under
 all encouragement in order to growth.

This grace as all other favours that
Heb. vi. 9. accompany salvation, proceeds from the
 everlasting love of God. All the works
 of Christ for us on earth and in hea-
 ven; all the operations of the spirit
 in and upon us from first to last proceed
 from thence. The love of God is not
 owing to the intercession of Christ,
 but the intercession of Christ to that.
*I say not unto you, that I will pray
 the father for you; for the father him-
 self loveth you,* therefore you have loved
 me, and have believed. For according
 to the whole current of God's word,
 $\delta\tau\:\iota$ should be taken illative in this place,
 as well as in *Luk. vii. 47.* and rendred
Jer. xxxi. 3. therefore. I have loved thee with an
 everlasting love, therefore with loving
 kindness have I drawn thee.

The righteousness of Jesus Christ in
 his active and passive obedience, with-
 out all peradventure is the procuring
 or meritorious cause of assurance, *The
 work of righteousness shall be peace,
 and the effect of righteousness, quietness
 and*

and assurance for ever; but the Holy and Eternal Spirit is the efficient cause and the more immediate author thereof in the soul. *Because we are sons,* Gal. iv. 6. *God sendeth forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba, father.* He seals unto us the assurance of sonship, and enables us to infer, that if sons, *then heirs, heirs of God, and joynth-heirs* Rom. viii. *with Christ.* This desirable work he ^{17.} begins and promotes by inhabitation, operation, giving possession and testimony. That the spirit of God as a comforter dwelleth in every believer, is as manifest as any other truth can be in the gospel: *he dwelleth with you, and shall Joh.xiv.17.* *be in you.* That his inhabitation is an eminent ground of assurance, is also very evident. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, *because* ¹ Joh. iv. *he hath given us of his spirit.* It is ^{13.} true, that when he hideth himself, none can behold him, and 'tis as true, that when he appeareth, he does so with unconquerable evidence. The Holy Spirit can in his own way, and will in his own time abundantly satisfie the person in whom he dwells, concerning the truth and reality of his inhabitation. And where he dwells, he will do so always: *He shall abide with you* Joh.xiv.16. *for ever.*

Where

Zech. xii. Where the spirit of God dwelleth, he also worketh. Faith in Christ, sincere love to God, evangelical sorrow for sin, earnest breathings after greater degrees of holiness, patience under afflictions,
10.

Gal. v. 22. Obedience to all Christ's institutions, and such like, are the works of the spirit of God in us: and when they appear in their beauty and reality are useful to promote assurance: we being helped by the spirit, who is the author of them, not only to discern those graces themselves, but to argue in a spiritual manner upon them: following the streams up to the everlasting spring of life and love, which gave them being and maintains them: and then forward unto the infinite and boundless ocean of happiness and glory in God, whereunto, according to God's covenant and oath, the soul who partakes of those fruits of the spirit shall certainly arrive.

Eph. i. 14. The Holy Spirit does not only work thus in the soul, but in a gracious manner bringeth heaven down into the heart in its fore-tastes and first-fruits. By him, and in him, we have the *earnest of our inheritance*; therefore it is said, the children of God *knew in themselves* that they had in heaven an enduring substance; or as the word may **Heb. x. 34.** be rendred, they knew they *had heaven in*

in themselves. Now, from the enjoyment of the pledge or earnest of heaven, we fairly argue still under the teachings of the spirit of God unto the possession of that glorious inheritance in all its fulness.

And moreover to make evangelical assurance compleat, the Holy Spirit according to the freeness and sovereignty of his grace, super-adds his own testimony, and causes the soul to believe it.

The spirit it self beareth witness with or to our spirits, that we are the sons of God. Rom. viii. 16.

He bringeth the precious promises of God to our remembrance, secretly, yet powerfully persuades our souls that we were intended by the Lord in promises of special grace, then sweetly draws our hearts to answer the promise as before hinted: *This God is our God for ever and ever.* Psal. xlvi. 14.

All manner of arguments used among men to work the mind into a certainty upon any affair, may be seen and consider'd in what we have here briefly mentioned upon gospel assurance. Artificial argumentation giving a rational ground, from the consideration of causes, effects, subjects, adjuncts, &c. for what we are assured of is not here rejected. An inartificial way of persuasion grounded upon testimony is here indeed embraced, and not without good reason prefer'd to any other, because a

Q

divine

Heb. vi. 18. divine testimony cannot deceive. What the spirit of God says in the word of the gospel, and according to that word in the heart of a poor believer is to be received without carnal hesitation: so that giving unto the spirit of God the preheminence here, is no subordinate way nor method of arriving at certainty of happiness excluded. The spirit's testimony is great, powerful, holy, and infallible, carrying its own evidence along with it: and that faith which he gives us receives the testimo-

Joh. iii. 33. ny, and setteth to its seal that God is
Joh. xvi. 14. true. Our Lord said that the spirit

should glorifie him, in taking of his, and discovering the same to us. Upon the discovery of Christ's glory by the spirit, the soul is made in some measure to cry out, *My Lord, and my God.*

Ia. xxxiii. By faith we see the king in his beauty,
17.

and when we do so, his attendants appear also, and we then know them to be his. The gifts and graces of the spirit then shine in his brightness: they are all his servants, and wait on him. Faith it self cannot see it self, but in his light. Separate faith from the glorious object thereof the person and fulness of Christ, and who can find it? and when faith is not found, who can

Rom. xiv. 23. find one good work? for whosoever is not of faith, is sin. Faith can never be discover'd

discover'd but in its immediate actings on the person of Christ. The spirit of *wisdom and revelation* discovers the Eph. i. 17: glory of Christ as a saviour to us, in the discovery gives unto us to venture our souls upon him by faith, and in the exercise of faith seals to us our sonship and glory: faith being to us under the spirit's teachings, *The evidence* Heb. xi. 1. *of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for.* And being brought to and kept in the exercise of faith, we shall discover a train of heavenly graces attending on the service of their Lord, useful in their places to promote our joy and peace. Thus Christ as the prime object of faith is exalted, the Holy Spirit the grand revealing evidence of our interest in Christ honoured, faith the receiving evidence in its due place established, and the subservient usefulness of the other fruits of the spirit in us, upon us, or by us in its proper station maintained.

In explaining this mystery, we are *barbarians* to all unbelievers, they understand not what we mean, nor can we help them: yet what we have seen we must declare, for he that believeth hath *the witness in himself*, and ^{1 Joh. v. 10.} having believed, we therefore speak: believing with the heart we confess with the mouth, looking up to the Rom. x. 10. *Lord,*

Lord, who can in his sovereign grace make a word drop'd to be a word in season, to strengthen the weak, and to enlighten the ignorant.

This grace of assurance which we have briefly explained, goes in company with the greatest of blessings; yea, all the blessings which are not to be separated from salvation, and is always attended with most precious fruits and consequences. So far as we partake of this grace, so far we cheerfully give glory to God as *Abraham* our father

Rom. iv. 20. did, *who staggered not at the promise.*

Ps. cxvi. 12. It leads us to enquire, what shall we

1 Cor. iv. 7. render to the Lord for all his benefits? those who enjoy assurance find, that it leads them to meekness, humility, and self-abasement: they see that they have nothing that is good, but what they

Rom. vi. 2. have freely received, and that by grace they are what they are. The more assurance they have of God's love, and of their interest in everlasting life, the more they hate sin, watch, pray, and

strive against it, and mourn before God under a sense of every evil whereof they know themselves guilty. Joy in the Lord, love to all the saints, patience under all afflictions, zeal for God and his service, divine breathings after the second appearance of Christ, and earnest desires after conformity to him,

and

and communion with him while waiting for him, are some more of the precious fruits which always flow from or attend upon evangelical assurance.

But perhaps it may be thought by some, that the greatness of the privilege seems to make it very improbable that any person should partake thereof, who at the same time judgeth himself the chief of sinners.

It must indeed be granted, that it is a consideration which leads the mind to holy astonishment, but it is not the only truth that does so. That this is a truth, and a glorious one, I hope will presently appear very evident: but before we enter upon the proof, in order to prevent any mistake, let it be observed, that the proposition does not mean that persons wallowing in sin, indulging themselves to iniquity, yielding themselves up to the dominion of any corruption, can possibly in that condition enjoy assurance. Hardly any thing more loathsome to a tender conscience, than to hear a drunkard, an unclean person, an apparent lover of this world more than God, a proud vain ignorant man boast of assurance. Where the things contrary to God's law are entertained and encouraged, and evangelical obedience neglected,

there, let persons pretend to what they please, evangelical assurance is not experienced. It is a grace which does not visit the profane, is far off from the proud, and dwells at a great distance from him who depends on his own works for salvation. Wherever it dwells, the power of godliness dwells with it as its inseparable companion. I must add, that the proposition does not intend that the persons who partake of assurance should always be supposed to be the greatest of sinners, nor that they should necessarily judge themselves to be such; nor does it in the least intimate that sin or the greatness of sin should be look'd upon as any way the cause of assurance: it only supposes it possible, that a person may judge himself to be the chief of sinners, and at the same time be well assured of his interest in the salvation of Christ. The truth whereof we shall now briefly consider.

1. We find it acknowledged by *David* the man of God, that his sins were
P. xxv. 11. very great, *wondrous great*, sins of an uncommon size, all circumstances being consider'd: yet in the midst of all he was helped to rest in assurance of pardon.
2. P. lxv. 3. Tho' he confessed that iniquities *prevail'd against him*, yet at the same time he believed God would *purge away his*

bis transgressions. Does he not in the 51st Psalm give a very particular account of the *greatness* of his sins, and in a very particular manner express his faith in the God of his salvation? his wounds indeed were fresh and wanted healing, his consolation low and wanted quickning; but he owns that God's Holy Spirit was with him, and that God was the *God of his salvation*. He does elsewhere profess, that God had mercifully deliver'd his soul from the *lowest hell*; plainly implying, that in his own judgment he fully deserved the greatest torment, and consequently thought himself the greatest transgressor.

2. Not to mention particular instances, the case of the whole Jewish church may be consider'd. In the third chapter of *Jeremy*, we find as dismal account of 'em as could be given of a people; they had spoke and done evil as they could; and *Ezekiel* after then tells us of 'em, that they had done worse than *Sodom* and her daughters: *Judah* had done not only worse than *Samaria*, but worse than *Sodom*. But how wonderful is the grace of God in pardoning sins! how wonderful in giving faith! *Return you backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings: behold, we come, for thou art the Lord our God.* It is impossible but such poor creatures must

Ezek. xvi.
46, 47, 48.

Jer. iii. 22.

Q 4 look

look upon themselves as the chief of sinners, and 'tis plain upon their return they acknowledge God to be their God. It is evident they must have the greatest sense of their uncommon iniquity, and it is plain that they should have strong faith in abundant pardon.

3. New testament instances also con-

^{2 Tim. iv. 18.} firm what is asserted. That *Paul* was blefs'd with great assurance of future happiness is very evident. He knew that the Lord would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom. He knew him whom he had believed. He knew that his grace should be sufficient for him.

^{Rom. viii. 38, 39.} He knew he should never be separated from the love of God in Christ. He knew Christ came to save him, and that he was accordingly saved by Christ: at the same time he judged himself to be the chief of sinners. So expressly in our text, *sinners of whom I am chief*; not of whom *I was chief*, but of whom *I am chief*. That was the judgment he made of himself, all things being consider'd.

^{Rom. vii. 24, 25.} *O wretched man that I am not that I have been, but that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.* Let those who understand neither *Paul* nor themselves, multiply cavils and contradictions, yet poor

poor souls truly humbled shall hear of this truth and be glad. What could Peter, on whom such distinguishing favours had been heaped, think of himself, when he had deny'd his Lord at such a time in such a place, and in such a manner? can we think he could have other thoughts of himself than that he was the chief of sinners? yet upon Christ's putting the question to him, *dost thou love me?* he appeals to Christ as omniscient, *Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest I love thee.* He was well assured the great concern stood firm. Thomas, who could no less than have a deep sense of the horrid sin of unbelief, whereby he had in a grievous manner distinguished himself, upon Christ's tender and compassionate call and encouragement, cries out, *My Lord, and my God.* A glorious confession of Christ's person, and of assured interest in his salvation! but what need is there of multiplying particular instances? when the gospel came first to the *Theſſalonians*, it came in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. They were worshippers of Idols just before, and when turned, must have upon their minds a deep sense of their exceeding sinfulness upon that account, were nevertheless

Joh. xxi.

17.

Joh. xx. 28.

1Theſſ. i. 5.

less blessed with much assurance in an instant.

4. It is very plain that God has often promised the spirit of adoption to his children. He has promised to comfort them as *one is comforted of his mother*. This comfort has in it doubtless that assurance whereof we are speaking. But would we know what thoughts they are to entertain of themselves, under all their high consolations?

Phil. ii. 3. *Let each esteem other better than themselves.* So that hereby we have not only the truth of the proposition rendred evident, that it is a possible thing for a person to be assur'd of salvation, who at the same time can no less than judge himself to be the chief of sinners, but such a self-abasing temper of spirit urged as a desirable qualification among the saints.

Things standing thus as explain'd and prov'd, we see that almighty power attends the testimony of the spirit of God. If it was not for that, it would be impossible for a poor soul who can no less than judge himself the greatest of sinners to be at the same time assured of life. Satan accuses with power, so doth the law and sin in the conscience; and no power but that which

which is indeed almighty can speak comfort to a poor soul *tossed with such a tempest.* We believe according to the working of the *exceeding greatness* of Eph. i. 19: his power.

Again, we see what thoughts a poor believer must have of Christ, the redemption that is in his blood, the efficacy of his intercession, the unchangeableness of God's love, the immutability of his covenant, the freeness and fulness of all grace: in the face of a world of guilt and unworthiness. He sees his life secured, tho' his soul may be oppressed, his everlasting happiness settled in Christ, tho' in himself he may seem to pass thro' a thousand deaths, and accordingly still ventures all for time and eternity upon the person, fulness and salvation of the redeemer.

How precious are thy thoughts to me! Ps. cxxxix.
17.

Then let us not be afraid to look upon our sins in their exceeding sinfulness. Indeed we are always bound to watch against all sin, and constantly to fear lest we offend: but seeing our Lord saveth to the uttermost, and seeing the Holy Spirit can and often does testify the love of Christ to the chief of sinners, let us take a view of our selves, and look over our wounds tho' never so dreadful, remembering that salvation

salvation and the assurance thereof may be enjoyed notwithstanding : for the spirit comforteth, not by discovering our sins to be little, but our salvation to be great.

In the darkest of times, let the weakest of saints, under a sense of the greatest guilt look up for the comforter. In abundance of grace he is promised, and in abundance of faithfulness the promise shall be fulfilled. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts

Luk.xi.13. to your children, *how much more* shall your heavenly father give the *Holy Spirit* to them that ask him.

Prop. IV. Whosoever preaches the salvation of Christ as free and full to the chief of sinners, preaches the faithful truth.

It is a faithful saying, or a true saying ; the word is rendered both ways, and will bear either or both ; therefore I choose to say, that the person that preaches the above-mentioned doctrine, preaches the *faithful truth*. For,

iCor. ii. 4. Then he declares the matter in its native simplicity. The gospel is a plain, fair account of God's everlasting love and grace ; the person, fulness, and office of Christ ; his life and death with the

the special design thereof; his resurrection, his ascension, his glory in heaven, and his making intercession for transgressors; together with the wonderful blessings, which, in the providence of God, and under the powerful operations of the eternal spirit follow thereupon. Now, to preach the gospel, is to give a true account of these deep things of God in simplicity and plainness, as they are revealed in the scriptures. When the truth is so preach'd or receiv'd, it may be said to be preach'd or receiv'd *as it is in Jesus.*

Eph. iv. 21.

Moreover, when a person does so preach the salvation of Christ to poor sinners, he preaches the faithful truth, because he preaches according to his special commission. He does what he is order'd to do. There are many things in themselves true, which Gospel-ministers have no commission to preach, go preach the *gospel* to every creature. Glad tidings of the saviour and his wonderful salvation they are to publish. The scripture makes mention of persons who made the hearts of the *righteous sad*, sewed pillows under the elbows of the wicked, that they might under carnal security sleep on in their sins; troubled the waters, the doctrines of the gospel, yet pretended they had their commission from God.

Mark. xvi.
15.Ezek. xii.
17—22.

Jer. xxiii. 28. God. But he that hath the word of the Lord, let him speak it faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? it was Paul's glory that he could say, *I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.*

Again, the faithful truth stands in the salvation of Christ, consistently preach'd, because then old testament types, prophecies and promises, which refer'd unto the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, are explain'd in their faithfulness, for the edification of

Joh. i. 17. new testament saints. *The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* The sacrifices of old were shadows, the sacrifice of Christ is that substantial one which put an end to all

Heb. x. 26. the rest. To preach the truth of the old sacrifices, is to preach Christ in truth,

Eph. v. 2. *Who gave himself for a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God.* Christ is the truth of all old testament shadows; in preaching him, in the glory of his person, the fulness and freeness of his salvation, the truth of both testaments is preach'd.

I must add, Christ Jesus as the salvation of God unto the end of the earth is that great and eminent truth, in whose light all other truths shine.

Joh. xiv. 6. *Christ saith of himself, I am the truth.*

He

He is the true light, he is full of grace ^{Joh. i. 9.} and truth. Christ himself as the saviour is the great text his dear servants should delight to insist upon. *Paul* determined to make known in the course of his ministry, nothing else but *Christ, and him crucified.* Christ the hope of glory, whom we preach. The spirit of God leading a poor soul in the ministry of the gospel to Christ, and his salvation, is said to *lead into all truth.* The gospel therefore may well be call'd *that word of the truth,* because it is the gospel of our salvation: and all the precious promises thereof are the *true sayings of God,* which in faithfulness shall be fulfilled.

It is a wonderful mercy to be blest with a consistent gospel-ministry, where the trumpet giveth a certain sound; *yea and amen* in Christ Jesus. To be fed with knowledge and understanding under the ministry of pastors given according to God's heart, must be reckoned among the *sure mercies of David.* Such servants and such sermons must be look'd upon as the special gifts of the *ascended* saviour. There are in the world who preach, but seldom preach truth; there are many who preach truth, but very seldom preach the truth; the God glorifying truth, the soul saving

^{Joh. i. 14.}^{1Cor. ii. 2.}^{Eph. i. 13.}^{2Cor.i.18.}^{Jer. iii. 15.}^{Eph. iv. 8.}

ving truth, the nature sanctifying truth, the heart strengthning truth, food for the new creature, that the children of **Eph.iv.15.** God may grow up in all things into Christ.

Let the servants of Christ in the ministry make Christ and his salvation more and more the subject of their studies, the scope of their sermons, and the very life of all their labours. To preach duty, is a duty incumbent upon preachers; yet no man but he that is found in Christ can be found in his duty: therefore it is impossible to preach duty aright without preaching Christ. If Christ as a saviour of poor sinners be faithfully preached, and truly received, good works will be carefully maintained *. Let all those who name the name of Christ unweariedly, attend upon the ministry of the gospel, where Christ Jesus as the salvation of God is constantly, consistently, and powerfully preach'd.

Prop. V. The salvation of Christ truly and faithfully preached is worthy of all acceptance.

The text does not say that the gospel meets with all acceptance; Christ

* It was Dr. Sibb's familiar advice to Dr. Goodwin; young man, if you ever would do good, you must preach the gospel, and the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. Dr. G's life, p. 17.

is disallowed and rejected of men; but Isa. lvi. 3.
the gospel wherein and whereby Christ
is published deserves all entertainment. 1 Pet. ii. 4.
Christ as revealed in the word of truth,
is worthy of all acceptance. Many
thousands there are indeed who pro-
fanely despise the salvation of God in the
gospel as that which they do not want;
and there are others, who, secretly, yet
sinfully cast away all hopes of interest
therein, as that whereof they are not
worthy: unto both, but especially the
latter we may have something to of-
fer from the present truth: *The salva-
tion of Christ truly and faithfully preach-
ed is worthy of all acceptance.* The
everlasting truth thereof, the won-
derful wisdom discover'd therein, the un-
speakable happiness conveighed there-
by, render it worthy to be received
by all persons, according to whatever
degree distinguished by all sorts of
sinners, how differently soever their
crimes may be aggravated; yea, worthy
to be received every manner of way
under all or any circumstances, and
unto all intents and purposes. *The law* Psal. xix.
*of the Lord is perfect, converting the 7-11.
soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple; the statutes of
the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightning the eyes; the fear of the*

R

Lord

Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, yea, than the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.

1. The salvation in the gospel revealed is worthy to be received by all sorts of persons, *both high and low, rich and poor together.* Those who are rich and increased in goods, and bless themselves in the enjoyment thereof, continuing despisers of, or strangers to the riches of the grace of God in the gospel, shall one day find themselves wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Tho' they may for the present be *clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day;* yet, being not rich towards God, shall hereafter be strangers to the least drop of refreshment. *Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.*
 2. Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but often are kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. And between one that
- Psal. 1, 2.
- Luk. xvi.
19-24.
- Jam. v. 1, 2,
3.
- Prov. xi. 4.
- Eccles. v.
13.

that depends upon his riches, who enjoys them; and another that would do so if he had them, there is no great difference. *They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare.* It is evident that without riches no true happiness, and it will be as evident that without faith no true riches. According to the judgment of God in his word, which all shall find 'ere long to Luk.xii.15. be higher reason than any call'd refined among men, he is the only happy person who is *rich in faith.* The Jam. ii. 5. riches of faith lie in the object thereof Christ Jesus; when he is evangelically received, the soul is truly enriched: riches and honour are with him; yea, durable riches and righteousness. *Let not therefore the rich man glory in Jer. ix. 23.* his riches; but count all loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Art thou a rich man? do but consider how rich thou wilt be a thousand years hence! how rich thou wilt be in eternity, where millions of ages make no alteration? there silver and gold are of no value. Happy the man whose riches are above. Christ is our fore-runner, and he is our treasure, for in him all fulness dwells, and *where our treasure Matt.vi.19.* is, there our hearts will be also. As the rich are miserable, who have not true faith in the salvation of God, so

are the poor who are in the same condition. Man's felicity does not lie in being poor, tho' some persons foolishly enough make poverty a preparative for glory. Pain and poverty have by some been thought to make up that cross which leads infallibly to a heavenly crown; rejecting that glorious salvation which is in Christ crucified: like those poor and foolish persons we read of, who *made their faces harder than a rock, and refused to return.* Art thou poor in this world? it is the salvation of God revealed in the gospel only that can make thee happy.

Jer. v. 3, 4.

Matt. xi. 5. the poor are *evangelized,* in a sense they are poor no longer: they are *Jam. ii. 5.* *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

2. The salvation of Christ faithfully preached is worthy to be received by all sorts of sinners, however by their different transgressions distinguished. Vast numbers there are in the world, who never will admit a thought of eter-

Eph. iv. 18, *nity to dwell upon their minds. Having the understanding darkned, being alienated from the life of God, thro' the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all unclean-*

19.

cleanness with greediness. O that such would give themselves leave to think, that by the devil's dictates, and the strong current of their own corruptions, they are hurried on to eternal destruction! consideration which a man must think should be inseparable from a rational mind, might be under the blessing of heaven of great use to them. But the devil will not grant, nor do they desire a breathing time. If by the providence of God any such persons may be so far stop'd as to cast a look upon these lines, I do earnestly desire they may by the power of God be brought to solid consideration, and shew *themselves men.* Thus said the Isa. xlvi. 8. Lord, *Consider your ways.* O that they Hag. i. 7. were wise, that they understood this, that *they would consider their latter end!* Deut. xxxii. 29. they willingly forget what should be their fear, embrace what should be their abhorrence, despise what should be their delight, and wickedly reject what should with the greatest joy be received. A wonderful and horrible Jer. v. 30. thing is committed in the land: the prophesie falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so, but what will they do in the end thereof? they shall in time know that the gospel of the grace of God is worthy of all accep-

R 3 tation;

tation ; or, that the rejecting of it procures greater condemnation.

Many there are who value themselves upon being better than others. *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are.* Their hopes of salvation they build upon the ruin of others, and upon some pitiful performances of their own. That they are sinners, they may in a general way grant ; but their sins being comparatively small, their good deeds many, and their good desires more, they no way question but they have a garment large enough to cover all their spots, especially if Christ be but so kind as to help them out, if there be any thing wanting. How forward soever some such persons may seem to be to make a profession of the word of grace, yet their hearts are dreadfully shut, barred, and bolted against the grace of the word. But let them know that the free and full salvation of God rejected by them is worthy of all acceptation, and unless they are brought to receive it as such, they shall perish in their sins, which, perhaps, unto their great surprize, they shall find greater than they are aware of. Supposing them guilty but of one sin ; yea, but of one sinful thought, nothing but the free and full salvation of God thro' the blood of Christ can deliver them from hell, and bring them to

to heaven. Let them flatter themselves how they will, God will by no means Exod. clear the guilty, and they shall know xxxiv. 7. that the wages of the least sin is death. Without Christ, without a compleat righteousness, and without a compleat righteousness without heaven; for the 1Cor. vi. 9. unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Happy is that poor soul who is brought to look upon his own Isa. lxiv. 6. righteousness as filthy rags, and to lean upon Christ as Jehovah his righteousness. Jer.xxiii. 6. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, Rom.i. 16. for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the just shall live by faith,

Some there are, thro' mercy, who are pricked in their heart, and cry out, Act. ii. 37. What shall we do to be saved? they Act.xvi.30. are made to see their lost and undone condition. God has given their faces a turn, and they begin to enquire the Jer. l. 5. way to Zion; yet perhaps under great discouragements, arising from weakness of apprehension and strength of corruption. The gospel is a word in season for them, and altogether worthy to be received by them. And so it is to others who heretofore had tasted and approved the grace of God,

yet by backsliding have so enfeebled
and bewildred their souls, that they

Ifa. i. 10. now walk in darkness, and have no light.

Unto both, the full and free salvation
of God consistently preach'd is worthy
of all acceptation. Christ says un-

Ifa. iv. 3. to such, Come unto me, and find rest ;
look unto me, and be ye saved. Poor
trembling guilty soul hear the joyful
sound, the mighty saviour speaks, Hear
and thy soul shall live.

*Matt. xi.
28, 29.* Come unto me all ye that labour
and are heavy-laden, and I will give
you rest ; take my yoke upon you, and
learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in
heart, and ye shall find rest unto your
souls. The call is express'd extensive
and encouraging. By coming unto
Christ, we are to understand believing
Joh. vi. 35. in him ; he that cometh to me shall
never hunger, and he that believeth on
me shall never thirst. They were not
to take up their rest in profession or
performances ; tho' it was their great
duty to wait upon the Lord, accord-
ing to *Mosaical* institutions at the
temple on set times, and to offer sa-
crifices and oblations as the case re-
quired, tho' never so costly and laborious,

Heb. ix. 10. until the time of reformation. Christ
did not call them from their duties,
but from resting in them. They were
not to rest in frames or qualifications,
in

in bare words or expressions, tho' of scripture, in holy designs or resolutions, in reformatiōns or amendments, things all very good in their places, but they were to come thro' all and above all to the person and fulness of Christ by faith. All things in comparison of Christ must be accounted as *loss and dung*, by all those who are coming unto him *as unto a living stone*. All that labour and are heavy-laden are called. Persons by nature are *dead in sins and trespasses*, and consequently have no motion against sin as sin, nor do they feel any load therein. Unto some of them the thoughts of everlasting punishment may be burdensome: *Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* but unto none of them is sin a burden. None of them can say as *David*, *Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me*. The text speaks of persons who groan under sin as a prodigious heavy burden, and labour against it unto weariness. Their labour is spiritual, their burden is so, therefore Christ promiseth them spiritual rest. All such are called and invited to rest, and in Christ's own way and time shall indeed partake thereof: for neither are they mocked, nor shall the call of Christ return unto them *unprofitable*.

Phil. iii. 8.

1 Pet. ii. 4.

Isa. xxxiii.

14.

Psal. xxxviii. 4.

Isa. iv. 11.

to

to him void. They shall come who are ready to perish. Let their labour be never so cutting and wearisome against the power of sin, let their souls be never so heavy-laden, under the unspeakable weight of aggravated guilt, they shall find rest. Art thou a poor, weary, wretched, distressed soul, and not comforted, but sinking under an insupportable burden of sin? *turn in to this strong hold.* No soul too weary to be relieved, no burden too heavy to be removed: for Christ says, *Come all,* he excludeth none. The encouragement is great, *I will give you rest:* and as further explain'd, you shall *find rest unto your souls.* He does not tell them that their legs, their arms, their shoulders should have rest, that they should neither go long journeys, nor carry heavy burdens, nor offer costly sacrifices; but they should find rest *unto their souls.* The tempest in the conscience should not only be moderated, but removed, the *blood of sprinkling speaking peace.* The prince of peace will give *beauty for ashes, the oyl of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.* Their souls shall find rest in Christ here, and with Christ hereafter. It is impossible to express the thousandth part thereof, it comprehends all our happiness: *Unto Christ shall the Gentiles*

Zech. ix.
12.

Heb. xii. 22, moved, the *blood of sprinkling speaking*

23, 24. *peace.* The prince of peace will give

Isa. lxi. 3. *beauty for ashes, the oyl of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

Their souls shall find rest in Christ here, and with Christ hereafter. It is impossible to express the thousandth part thereof, it comprehends

Isa. xi. 10. all our happiness: *Unto Christ shall the Gentiles*

Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. Poor discouraged soul, attempt thy duty and privilege, behold he calleth thee. He who taketh *Ephraim* by Hos xi. 3. the arms, and teacheth him to go, calleth thee. Look over the gospel, and behold the fulness of grace and truth. Tho' thou art an uncommon sinner, an old sinner, the greatest of sinners, who hast brought the sins of others also upon thy self many a time, tho' thou hast sinned against knowledge, against love, and mercy, and that in rage and madness too against God and all goodness, tho' thou canst no otherwise than think that thou hast wofully fallen after having been enlightened, after thou hadst tasted the heavenly gift, after thou hadst been made partaker of the Holy Ghost, and judgest that thou hast sinned wilfully after thou hadst received the knowledge of the truth, hast been guilty of bitter and long backslidings, hast done evil as thou couldst, hast deserved ten thousand deaths, dost find in thy self at present strong corruptions working against God, findeſt thy self guilty of all that has been, or more than can be said, and perhaps ver-
ry dead, dull, and heavy as to any spiritual desires under all; yet tho' surrounded and filled with discouragements, venture thy poor, sinful, guilty soul upon the almighty faviour. He says,

I will

Joh. vi. 37. *I will in no wise cast out.* Christ who calls has been every way tried ; he is a tried stone. The father tried him, and was well pleased ; the devils tried him, and were conquered ; poor sinners tried him in a way of trust, and were made to triumph : and whoever trusteth in him shall never be confounded. He

Joh. vii. 37. still calls, *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.* Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come buy wine and milk without money and price.

Unto a poor soul under wounds and weaknesses, who cannot perhaps to his own satisfaction find any motion towards Christ in coming faith, the Lord descends in another expression of grace.

Isa. xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.* Believing is called in the scripture, looking unto Jesus. To see the son, and to believe on him,

Joh. vi. 40. are expressions equivalent. The term does in a special manner explain the nature of faith, and prove the fulness of salvation. The sight adds nothing unto its object, only takes in what is presented before it. Faith adds nothing unto the salvation wrought by Christ, only it beholds, approves, and receives Christ as the all-sufficient salva-

salvation of God. They looked unto him, and were lightned, and their faces were not ashamed. The brazen serpent was a standing ordinance for the relief of the poor Israelites wounded in the wilderness. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. Poor soul! art thou wounded? art thou lost? art thou undone? canst thou see nothing in thy self but what continually encreaseth thy discouragement? canst thou find nothing in the world but what leads thee to despair of all relief? the Lord help thee to look, tho' under weakness and trembling unto him who is from above, and is above all. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Grant that thou art as unworthy a wretch as can live, yet attempt to look up to the ascended saviour, and consider the apostle and high-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Let thy days, thy months, thy years be spent in repeated attempts this way, for he calls, look unto me, and be ye saved. There is salvation in no other; therefore desire God to turn away thy eyes from beholding vanity. He calls all the ends of the earth, because he would be sure to include the chief of sinners. He offers a sufficient reason to justify his

Psxxxiv.5.

Johiii. 14.

15.

Joh. iii. 31.

Exod. xiv.

Heb. iii. 1.

A&. iv. 12.

Psclxix.37.

Heb. ix. 6. his call, and our compliance: *for I am God, and there is none else.* Christ as he is the *mighty God*, is a firm foundation for faith, and a proper object of divine worship. To look unto the most exalted creature that can be formed or supposed in any such way, is from the very nature of the thing downright idolatry. God cannot command it, because God cannot lye. Poor discouraged soul! under millions of diffi-

Phil. iv. 19. culties look unto Jesus: in him thou shalt find all thy wants supplied, and in looking, thou shalt find thy sight strengthned. Dost thou want bowels and tender mercies to pity thee? dost thou want blood of infinite value to wash thee? dost thou want righteousness to cover thee? dost thou want a saviour filled with all **Heb. vii. 25,** readiness to receive thee, and power to **26.** protect thee? yea, dost thou stand in need of one who is every way able to

Jer. 1. 34. save to the uttermost? look unto Jesus, he is the *strong redeemer*, the Lord of Hosts is his name, who will *throughly plead thy cause.* Art thou for a salvation every way free without money, and without price? look unto Jesus. Dost thou find the eye of faith very weak? in another sense much like him, *who saw men like trees walking;* in self-abasement wait to have thine

Rev. iii. 18. *eyes anointed with eye-salve that thou mayest*

mkest see. Still attempt to look up ;
the sun thro' a cloud will afford some
comfort. Tho' thou art the greatest of
sinners on the face of the earth, come
and welcome, look up and live.

We have from scripture demonstrated,
that there is no sin now unpardonable.
Let the wicked forsake his way, Isa. iv. 7.
and turn to the Lord, he will have mer-
cy upon him, and will abundantly pardon.

Art thou afraid poor sinner that it is
too late? that the door is shut? that
the day of grace is past? God in the
scripture has provided an encouraging
answer. *Bring in hither the poor, the Luk. xiv.*
maimed, the halt, and the blind : and 21, 22.
the servant said, Lord it is done as
thou hast commanded, and yet there is
room. There is room poor sinner for
such as thou art, let thy condition be
never so miserable. Christ still recei- Isa. xl ix. 8.
veth sinners, and communeth with them.
The *intercession* of the mediator, and 2Cor. vi. 2.
the *preaching* of the gospel testifie the
continuation of the day of grace. Christ
is always heard, and the gospel shall
not return void. By the parable of the
fig-tree cumbring the ground, and by
Jerusalem's not knowing the day of
her peace, we are to understand, that the
destruction of Jerusalem as a city was Luk. xix.
hastning, and that the dispersion of the 41, 42, 43.
Jews 44.

Jews was at hand: nothing else is intended thereby. But as for that unscriptural day of grace which some men have opened and shut at their pleasure, and wherewith some tender consciences have been dismally frightened, so inconsistent with the doctrine of God's decrees, and so pernicious to true holiness and comfort, the folly thereof is made manifest by this time unto many, I wish I could say unto all. Poor trembling sinner! *Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, it is not past.*

Art thou afraid that thou art not elected? consider that the devil knows nothing of God's secret decrees: they are far above out of his sight, whatever he may tempt thee to think: then as to thy self, the most diligent rational search thou canst make, can never discover the impenetrable counsels of *Jehovah*. The discovery must be God's work in God's way: in God's ordinary way expect it, and tho' it tarry, wait for it. It has been God's ordinary way to bring his people to venture their souls upon *Christ*, themselves as yet not knowing their election. First *they make their calling, then their election* sure. And why should God step out of his way for thee? why should

should he not do with thee as with the *generation* of his children ? the wise God has judged this method most for his glory, and why should a poor worm desire it to be otherwise ? cast thy self as a poor perishing sinner on Christ, then conclude thy election : so thou wilt follow the foot-steps of the Song. i. 8. flock.

Now poor sinner who art languishing under all manner of discouragements ; *Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.* In the face of thousands of difficulties and fears, venture on the mighty mediator. As thou art poor and vile, having nothing but what is loathsome and burdensome, cast thy self upon him. There is not one word in the Bible against thee ; yea, every part thereof rightly understood encourages thee so to do.

Take this one rule, whenever thou thinkest that any part of God's word seemeth to be against thy immediate venture upon the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, that part of God's word is misinterpreted unto thee, or misunderstood by thee. Whatever tends to bring thy soul to God, thro' Christ, is from the spirit of Christ ; whatever tends to keep thee back in unbelief, is from the flesh and the devil, in hearing,

ing, in reading, or in meditating, this rule will be found of great use, if observed.

Again, in venturing thy poor soul upon Christ as the salvation of God, venture as a poor perishing sinner, without consulting thy own heart as to encouragement or discouragement. Suppose thou art the greatest sinner that can be found, yet in the face of all venture upon the almighty all-sufficient saviour. The direct, the nearest way for a poor sinner under darkness, is to venture himself upon Jesus Christ, as if he never had believed before, and he shall lose nothing by this in the end. Suppose that hitherto thou hast been a poor unconverted wretch, no right work having passed upon thee, yet thou art but a great sinner, suppose the greatest, and as such venture

Heb.vii.25. now. Christ is *able to save to the uttermost*. He came into the world, suffer'd in the world, is gone out of the world, yet liveth in heaven, and hath all the world under his power on purpose to save sinners, and still *Joh.vi.37.* says, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*

3. As the gospel faithfully preached deserves to be received by sinners of all sorts, so it deserves to be received every

every manner of way. In its doctrinal report it is worthy of all credit. Whatever is deliver'd in it, claims the immediate *assent* of the judgment and understanding as the highest *truth*, and the *goodness* of the report is such, that it deserves the immediate *consent* of the will. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, receives the gospel of the grace of God in both respects; for an idle assent is no true faith. Christ's *people shall be willing in the day of his power.* *Psal. cx. 3.*

4. The gospel is worthy to be received under all circumstances. The unseen piece of ground, the unproved oxen, the new married wife cannot excuse any person despising the gospel before God, however he may for the present stop the mouth of his own conscience. The loss of all possessions, the frowns of all near and dear relations, the prospect of the greatest afflictions in this world, a person should embrace rather than put off ^{Luk. xiv. 18, 19, 20.} ^{Mark. x. 29.} ^{*Theffeli. 5*} the acceptation of the gospel one day, or one hour longer. The grace of God shined eminently upon the *Theffaloni-ans*, in that they received the word in much *Affliction.*

5. The gospel of our salvation deserves to be receiv'd to all intents ^{Rom. x. c,} and

and purposes, to be believed with the heart, to be confessed with the mouth, to be professed in the world in all holiness of conversation, to be held forth in all obedience to God in following him in all gospel-church institutions, family worship, heavenly carriage towards others in all relations and capacities whatever, and to be convers'd with in a retir'd attendance upon God in private prayer, evangelical expectation, and humble, yet familiar fellowship with the mystery. *It is worthy of all acceptation.* Therefore

Let the bounty of divine grace in sending us such a treasure be for ever adored; for *we have this treasure in earthen-vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

2Cor.iv.7. *Eph. iii. 8.* To have the unsearchable riches of Christ preach'd among the *Gentiles*, should always be thankfully mentioned, as an eminent instance of divine liberality.

Let the folly of man be for ever acknowledged and bewailed. What is not worthy of a thought he receives and retains, dwells upon, and delights in, wilfully neglecting, and stubbornly rejecting what in the wisdom of God is worthy of all acceptation.

How

How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in ^{Prov. i. 22,} _{23.} their scorning? and fools hate knowledge? turn ye at my reproof: behold I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

Let the righteousness of God in taking vengeance be for ever vindicated. It is granted, that all men by nature deserve eternal destruction, and it is very evident, that persons in rejecting, despising, or indeed neglecting the gospel of the grace of God procure unto themselves aggravated condemnation. *This is the condemnation* ^{Joh. iii. 19.} *that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Is the salvation of Christ faithfully preach'd worthy of all acceptance? let all the servants of Christ constantly and consistently preach it: let all who hear the sound thereof look upon it as their immediate duty, readily and cheerfully to embrace it; and let all those who have received the grace of God, by renewed and repeated acts of faith receive it again. In all instances of duty testify their thankfulness for it to God, at all seasons rejoice in it with the saints, and by all ways and means recommend it

Joh. i. 3, 4. it to poor unconverted sinners. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the father, and with his son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

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